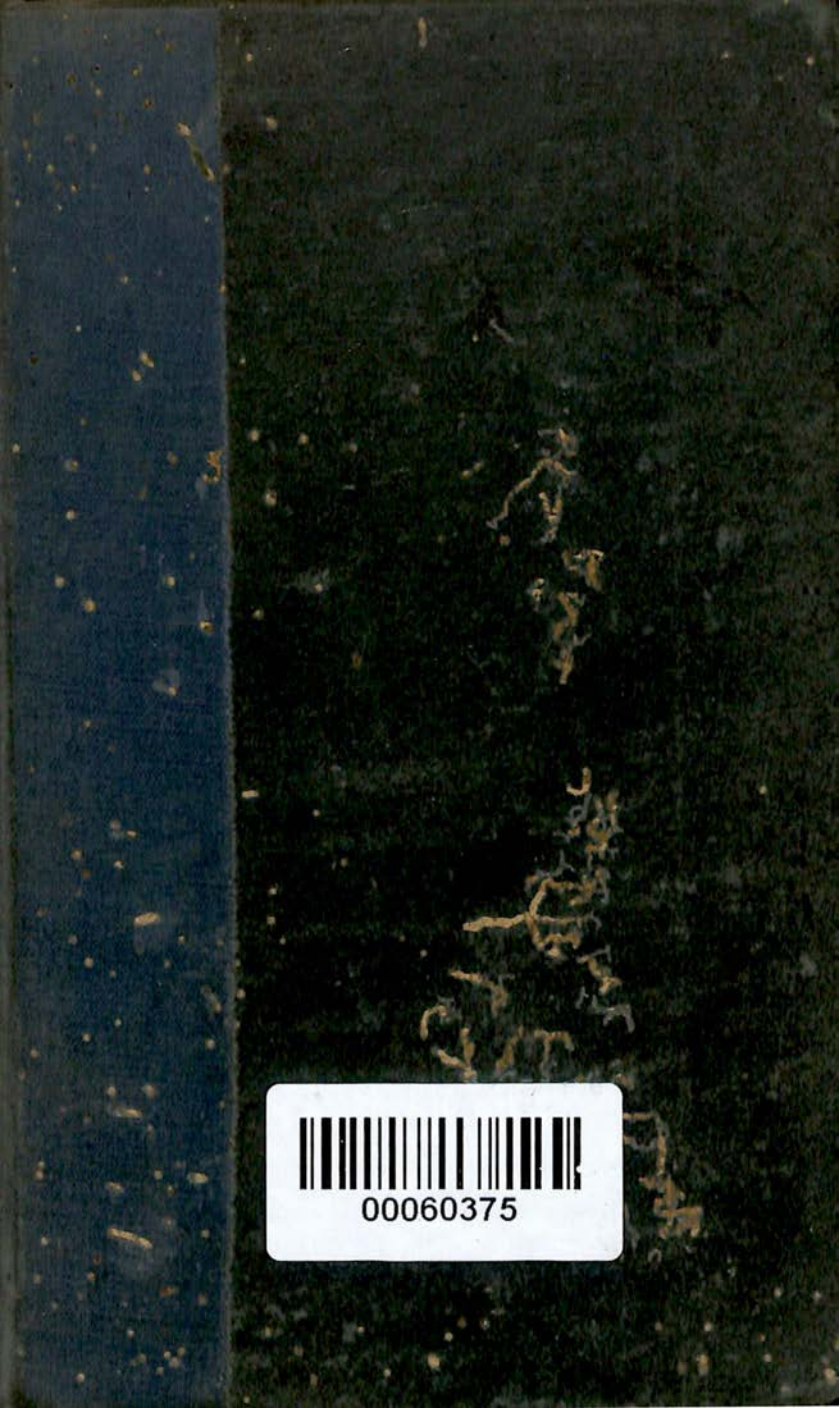
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EASTERN ENGLAND,

FROM

THE THAMES TO THE HUMBER.

VOL. I.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A Londoner's Walk to the Land's End; and a Trip to the Scilly Isles.—*Second Edition.*

On Foot through Tyrol.

A July Holiday in Saxony, Bohemia, and Silesia.

A Month in Yorkshire.—*Fourth Edition.*

Northumberland and the Border.—*Second Edition.*

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A Sailor Boy's Log-book from Portsmouth to the Peiho.—*Edited by Walter White.*

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NORTH
THE WASH
SUFFOLK
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
REFERENCE to the HUNDREDS
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English Miles
Longitude East & West from Greenwich
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EASTERN ENGLAND,

FROM

THE THAMES TO THE HUMBER.

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BY

WALTER WHITE,

AUTHOR OF

"A LONDONER'S WALK TO THE LAND'S END," "A MONTH IN YORKSHIRE," AND OTHER BOOKS OF TRAVEL.

"Tout est voyage dans le voyage de la vie, tout est sujet de causerie entre vieux amis."
GEORGE SAND.

RX. C. 34

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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1865.

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"As Essex hath of old been named 'Calves and stiles,'
Fair Suffolk 'maids and milk,' and Norfolk 'many wiles;'
Bean-belly Le'sterahire her attribute doth bear,
And 'bells and bagpipes' next, belong to Lincolnshire."

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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

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EASTERN ENGLAND,

FROM

THE THAMES TO THE HUMBER.

CHAPTER I.

A Plan and its Consequences—Anticipations—Notes of People and Places—An Invitation—The Mail Train.

SOME of my friends pitied me, some looked surprised, and some laughed, when, in answer to their inquiries, I told them that East Anglia was to be the scene of my next holiday travel. "East Anglia!" exclaimed one, "why, my dear fellow, 't is actually wasting a holiday to spend it in those dull flat counties." Another, recalling the old nursery rhyme, asked whether I intended a visit to the old woman of Norwich who lived on nothing but porridge; and another bade me look out for the wood where the Norfolk gentleman's two pretty babes went wandering up and down, and that piteous tragedy was enacted which on recital still brings tears into the eyes of childhood. Even the sedate companion of my walk across the ridge of Clee, as we talked the subject over to beguile the way on that sweltering summer

evening, even he rejoined, "The Eastern Counties! thou won't find much to interest thee there; it is all so very tame."

"We shall see," was my reply. "But whether or not, my mind is made up for an exploration of the flat side as well as the hilly side of our native land. And though some say that the east is formed only by the washings down from the west, I have already seen enough to convince me that it is not so uninteresting as most people believe."

Is it not the ancient Danelagh, where the Scandinavian invaders made themselves at home after their piratical manner, and Danish kings reigned during twenty-five years, extorting the Danegelt, and sorely oppressing the native inhabitants, as the rhyming chronicler relates?

> "Compelling men by grievous draught
> As beasts to plough their land."
>
> "Lord Dane the name was called then,
> To them a pleasing name,
> Now odiously Lur-dane say we,
> When idle mates we blame."

And within that territory an observant traveller can still discover in names and features traces of the Danish occupation.

My anticipations of pleasurable results were strengthened by my recollections of a month's ramble in the Netherlands, where in the nature and aspect of the country I found a constant source of interest. And it was hardly likely that the Low Countries of England would prove less attractive than those on the other

side of the North Sea. Moreover favourable testimony was forthcoming. "'T is flat enough, but you will find it a beautiful walk from Yarmouth to Irstead," said an eminent botanist, to whom I here repeat my thanks for his letters of introduction. "Norfolk 's a beautiful county," protested a native, accosting me in Piccadilly; "I have stood many a time on the top of the castle hill at New Buckenham, and seen the whole country for miles around covered with ripe corn, and if that is n't a fine sight, what is?"

This was touching an essential question: an Englishman has reason to be proud of his country's agriculture, and where can he see that to better advantage than in the four counties between Thames and Humber? And the readers who in former holidays have seen with me what can be accomplished by the loom and the anvil, will perhaps not be unwilling to witness the achievements of the plough. Among the looms and the forges we felt how intimate was their dependence on the fields and pastures, and in our present travel we shall remember how much the welfare of the fields and pastures depends on the tens of thousands who congregate around the looms and the mines.

Then in those eastern counties there are local peculiarities of speech and of custom, as well as geological formation, which will entertain and instruct us. We shall find traces of the great immigration of Hollanders and Flemings—victims of hideous cruelty, which took place

"When Alva's tyranny the weaving arts
Drove from the fertile valleys of the Scheldt,

While good Eliza to the fugitives
Gave gracious welcome.—
Then, from fair Antwerp, an industrious train
Cross'd the smooth channel of our smiling seas;
And in the vales of Cantium, on the banks
Of Stour alighted, and the naval wave
Of spacious Medway: some on gentle Yare
And fertile Waveney pitch'd; and made their seats
Pleasant Norvicum, and Colcestria's towers."

And there, besides traces of Danes and Dutchmen, a traveller of ready ear will learn that many of the words used by the New Englanders, are not, as is commonly supposed, Yankee inventions; but are importations from the eastern shore of old England. And along with forms of speech the early settlers of Massachusetts carried with them the litigious spirit which, as is said by those who know them well, still characterizes the folk they left behind. And of churches there are so many that we may visit a score in a day's walk, and find the old proverb realized, "The farther from stone, the better the church;" and we may hope to see some of our cathedrals, "those august trophies," as Dean Stanley calls them, "of Ecclesiastical History, instructive beyond those of almost any other country." And besides all this, legend and tradition abound, as in every other English county, and History will be there to meet us with her wealth of lore, and her annals

——"of great old houses,
And fights fought long ago."

And among these last there are fights of industry by which Eastern England has achieved such triumphs over the most formidable of elements, and such pros-

perity, as to excite the astonishment and admiration of the beholder. There man bids the sea keep back, and snatches year by year fresh acres from the waves. Is there not in that something which may compensate for the absence of bold and sublime scenery? And though lofty hills and craggy glens are denied to our eastern border, it has beauty of another kind in the broadest of levels. If height has a charm, why not breadth? From the one as from the other we derive an impression of vastness and solitude."

Hence I was looking forward without misgivings to a holiday in the flat lands, when on a gloomy winter's day there came to me a letter, which offered yet another attraction; and as I desire to maintain those amicable relations between author and reader which arise out of candour and confidence, I print here a few passages—"I have journeyed with you over more than one spot of Merrie England," wrote the stranger, "and I gather from your works that you have an annual holiday. If you have made no arrangements for the ensuing summer, will you visit ancient Norfolk? I will take you in my yacht along its rivers, and (as they call them here) its broads, *i.e.* lakes; and will enable you by foot or otherwise to see all that is worth seeing in a peculiarly interesting county. For though we lack the magnificent scenery in which I revelled during my twelve years' residence in the golden valley of the Ure, we have much here to interest the antiquary and to gratify the tourist; very much to make up the pith and marrow of an entertaining book for next Christmas. Moreover, are we not an aristocratic set, entitled to look down on all

dwellers in those parts which our rustics speak of as the Sheres?

"By descent and property a Norfolkian, I am by birth an Irishman, and I give you this invitation with all the heartiness and sincerity of the land of my birth. I know not who you are, nor your dwelling-place; but I am sure from your books that I shall welcome you here, and do all I can to show you the best points of our county."

An invitation so well-timed and full of promise could not fail of acceptation; yet as the letter was dated from a vicarage, I found myself speculating as to whether a stranger could live comfortably for a few days in companionship with what has been described as "official belief." I had long wished for so much acquaintance with a clergyman as would admit of unreserved questioning, and here the opportunity seemed to await me. Sydney Smith said that a clergyman was a man thrown into life with tied hands, and bidden to swim; and I felt curious to know what one in such circumstances thought about himself. Did he regard his work as a business, or as a high irresistible calling? Was preaching irksome to him? Did he admire Dissenters? and what did he think of the Athanasian Creed? There seemed a prospect that these and other questions might get asked and answered in idle days on board the yacht, or during our supplementary peregrinations.

So it was with various expectations that I left London by mail-train on the last evening of June in that unkindly summer of 1860. Such unpromising weather had never before attended me in any one of

my years of travel, and if ever talk about the weather was pardonable among railway passengers, it was then. But if you, reader, are like-minded with myself, we can find a subject that will interest us more than weather talk during a night journey; and while the train is rushing onwards, let us seize the opportunity for a ramble in one of the most agreeable parts of the county of Essex.

CHAPTER II.

A pretty Word—A threatened Deprivation—The Forest of Essex—Stratford—Leyton—The Lea—Leytonstone—Wanstead Flats—George III., Queen Elizabeth, and King James—Lord Tylney's House—Bradley the Astronomer—The Ill-ford and Stothard—Snaresbrook—Genteel, rude, and beery Encroachers—Woodford—Walthamstow—Earl Waldegrave and Alderman Copeland—A Buck a Year—Chingford—Merry Edmonton—Who was Johnny Gilpin?—Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge—More Encroachments—Buckhurst Hill—King Harold's Manor—A Forest Walk and fine Prospect—Chigwell Row—A pleasant Site—The Maypole—Bad London Beer—A choice of Routes—Haveringatte-Bower—A Prospect of London—A Monarch and a Miracle—Quaint Quarles—Hainault Forest—Fairlop—Inclosure *versus* Nature—The Easter Hunt—The angry Verderer—Lord Brougham outwitted—Loughton—Thousands of Visitors—High Beech—Liberty and License—Turpin's Cave—The last Deer—Persecution of Picnics—Locksley Hall—The Peasant Poet—Epping—Ludlow's Detention—An Oaken Church—The tomb of John Locke—Honey Lane—Waltham—Harold's Tomb—Queen Eleanor's Cross—An Author's Dwelling.

A BOHEMIAN damsel, to whom I once gave a lesson in English under a clump of larches in her native valley, took up the word forest from my recitation and repeated it a few times with signs of pleasure, as if finding therein some unexpected charm. "Forest—forest—forest," she said. "What a pretty word it is! Forest!—it sounds like the wind among the branches; much prettier than our *Wald*."

Happy are they whose perceptions are as true as

the damsel's, and who can feel and enjoy the charm of the forest. And we—that is, you and I, gracious reader —who are about to renew acquaintance, can we begin our holiday better than by acknowledging the charm, and using our diligence to yield thereto? No long delay interposes, for the Forest of Essex, or Waltham Forest, as it was once called, is not far off; and we shall enjoy it as captives enjoy their last hours of liberty, because of impending changes. A committee of the House of Commons have recommended that, with some comparatively small exceptions, the whole of the seven thousand acres as yet uninclosed shall be disafforested, inclosed, and sold; a recommendation which threatens the tens of thousands of Londoners who there seek recreation, with abolition of the right and privilege which they have enjoyed from time immemorial of wandering at will over that delightful sylvan region. As poor John Clare writes in one of his forest sonnets:

> "I could not bear to see the tearing plough
> Root up and steal the forest from the poor,
> But leave to freedom all she loves, untamed,
> The forest walk enjoy'd and loved by all."

Whether we start from Fenchurch Street, or from that Shoreditch terminus, which Directors fondly euphemize into Bishopsgate, the journey across eastern London presents so much of shabbiness and squalor that we rush the more gladly to the green meadows and wooded slopes of Essex. At Stratford the railway divides: straight on runs the line to Cambridge on the edge of two counties, while the Colchester line slants

off to the right, and in the angle between the two lies the district which we are about to explore. A branch line which penetrates it and for the present terminates at Loughton, will facilitate our movements. Our story may be said to begin as we cross the Lea and leave Middlesex behind, and remark the pleasantness of the Londoners' eastern neighbourhood. Numerous "fair houses" built by the citizens of former days, looking antiquated among the villas and cottages of modern times, testify of the favour in which the district was held. And if we may judge from the remains of buildings and tesselated pavements brought to light by the spade, the Romans took advantage at an earlier day of the agreeable building sites that so abound in this part of the territory of the Trinobantes.

The landscape begins to look woody at Leyton (Lea-ton), whence we can view the broad vale which has become classic ground ever since happy old Isaak went a-fishing in the river that winds slowly through the fertile pastures on its way to the Thames: King Alfred's river; for it was on the Lea that he outwitted the Danes and captured their fleet, and made it the boundary of the fierce invaders' settlements. Anglers still haunt its banks; but at a safe distance above the outfall where the offensive foulness of the gentle stream almost exceeds description. And other names claim passing notice: Strype the antiquary was vicar of Low Leyton for nearly seventy years, as is recorded on his tomb in the church; where also may be seen a tablet to Bowyer the printer. Oliver Cromwell of Hinchinbrooke once had an estate at Leyton. Sir Thomas Rowe, whose name was given with a "welcome"

to an arctic island more than two hundred years ago, was of Leyton; and in Temple Mills within the parish we have a reminiscence of the Templars to whom they formerly belonged. The *Green Man* at Leytonstone, the next station, was once a lodge on the edge of the forest. Now the view is thickly sprinkled with houses, as if London had already spread itself hitherwards in a sporadic form.

If we alight here and walk westwards, we find ourselves presently on Wanstead Flats, a breezy expanse of furze and bramble, heath and fern. Many a lively game have I played there with bat and ball or among the leapers in days when the view contained fewer buildings than at present; when there was no big Lunatic Asylum on one side of the railway to look across at a handsome red-brick Merchant Seamen's Hospital on the other, and when a cemetery formed no part of the prospect. Here, as elsewhere in the forest region, encroachments have diminished the free range, yet the present extent of the Flats is described as four hundred acres. In 1806, George III. reviewed ten thousand troops here; and a few years ago Lords Hardinge and Raglan recommended the appropriation of the Flats as an exercise ground, and General Torrens, who was sent down to survey, reported in favour of the recommendation. And here it was that a site was first proposed for the Wellington College, its nearness to Woolwich having been considered an advantage.

When Queen Elizabeth reproached Essex for his unsuccessful expedition to Spain, the proud Earl retired in anger to Wanstead. Was it in his house that her Majesty and her successor, James the Sapient, were

entertained in later years? Be this as it may, evidence of an earlier occupation—coins, pavements, urns, bones, and teeth—have been found in various parts of the estate; testifying to the firm footing the Romans acquired in Essex. From an early date they made the county their basis of operations against the midland tribes.

Sir Josiah Child, one of the originators of the well-known banking-house by Temple Bar, afterwards bought and planted the estate. His successor, the first Earl Tylney, pulled down the old house in 1715, and built a new one, of which Colin Campbell was the architect, in a style that for magnificence was scarcely to be equalled in the kingdom. The front, of Portland stone, was two hundred and sixty feet in length, with a Corinthian portico, and appropriate statuary. It was approached by an avenue extending nearly all the way to Leytonstone, and being placed amid gardens, terraces, and wildernesses, relieved here and there by water, Wanstead House must have been a very agreeable residence. Eventually it came into the possession of Sir James Tylney Long, a nephew of the Earl's; and when Mr Pole Wellesley married Miss Tylney Long, the heiress, the house fell to him, and he into difficulties, in consequence of which the furniture and fittings of the house were sold by auction. The sale took place in June, 1822, lasted thirty-two days, and produced £41,000. The house itself was then offered for £10,000. An enterprising estate-agent, thinking that the façade would make an excellent front for a National Gallery, then much wanted in London, opened negotiations for the purchase; but he was anticipated by certain speculators from Norwich, who

bought the house and sold and dispersed the whole as building materials. The park in which it stood has since been cut up, and let to builders and graziers.

One more reminiscence, and then we will ramble onwards. Bradley the astronomer was a frequent sojourner in his early years at Wanstead, where under the tuition of his uncle, the Rev. Dr Pound, "one of the best observers in England," he acquired the skill that widened the scope of his genius; and after the uncle's decease, it was "at his aunt Pound's house in Wanstead town," that the future astronomer-royal set up his telescope in 1727, and continued his series of observations, by which his discovery of the aberration of light was confirmed, and his fame established. The house, which was one of a row, was pulled down so long since, that the site could not be determined with accuracy more than thirty years ago.

From the southern border of the Flats, the ground sinks down to the marshy levels of the vale of Thames. Thence, if the air be not too smoky, we can discern Greenwich and Woolwich, and Ilford in the foreground beneath us. We shall traverse that flat region on our way back to London some weeks hence, and a closer view of it will satisfy us that the ford over the Roding must have been a very foul one to have perpetuated its condition in the name of the town—Ill-ford. It was not an agreeable place for Stothard, who went to school there, to learn "all the accomplishments," and found half-starvation included among them.

We return to the railway at Snaresbrook, whose well-known *Eagle* standing by the side of a dusty road, with a large pond in front, attracts hundreds of that numer-

ous class of Londoners who worship Saint Monday. Hereabouts again, as was stated in evidence before the parliamentary committee, the public have suffered loss by encroachment, "many acres in that part of the forest, very fruitful in verdure, having been taken in to a gentleman's park, and inclosed." No wonder that squatters profit by the "gentleman's" example, and gradually acquire a possession in the forest, enlarging their territory year by year by means of "rolling fences," which somehow always inclose a larger and larger space. Many an estate has been gained or enlarged in this crafty way, and held in defiance of authority, till lapse of time assured a right. But, as appears from the evidence, the most active encroachers are brewers. And instances have occurred of fees, payable to the lord of the manor, finding their way into the pockets of bailiffs and stewards, or keepers.

The train carries us in a few minutes to Woodford, the birth-place of Sydney Smith, and a place of subdivisions, comprising Woodford Wells, once in repute for a mineral spring, and Woodford Green, where on Sundays you may see a number of vans and other vehicles, and throngs of folk from Whitechapel and Mile End enjoying sports and pastimes after their manner. Royal Jamie, who seems to have been fond of hunting in the forest, used to take luncheon at a house in Woodford Row, which was afterwards inhabited by Warner, author of *Plantæ Woodfordiensis*. A little to the right is Woodford Bridge, spanning an ancient ford across the Roding; and as the neighbourhood is well covered with timber, we may easily infer the origin of the name.

Walthamstow, of sylvan-sounding name, lies but a short distance to our left, with yet enough of wood about it to mark the significance of the Saxon original. It once belonged to the great Earl Waltheof. Now the master-keeper of Walthamstow Walk—one of the ten Walks into which the forest is divided—is Mr Alderman Copeland, who, by virtue of his office, is "entitled to one buck annually, to the privilege of shooting, and the appointing of a deputy-keeper, which keeper is paid by the Crown." "One buck only?" asked the chairman of the committee, when the Alderman was giving his evidence. "One buck only, and but once in my life; and that under rather peculiar circumstances," answered the master-keeper, and explained: "My children were riding through the forest, and they observed a very fine buck; they told me of it, and I immediately went the next day with my children to the under-keeper, and insisted on his killing the buck; and afterwards found out that the animal was intended to be kept in clover for one of the verderers." Let any one read through the Report on the Royal Forest of Essex, and he will discover that under-keepers and verderers have much to answer for.

From Walthamstow, north-easterly to Chingford, is a pleasant walk, which you may make the more agreeable by keeping under trees for the greater part of the way, crossing at times a green ride from one range of oak and hornbeam, fern and moss, to another, now cutting off a corner by a field-path, or a furlong of brambly lane. Should you desire to indulge a sympathizing reminiscence of Margaret Plantagenet, Countess of Salisbury, whose gray hairs could not save her from

King Harry's axe, you may diverge to look at Salisbury Hall farm, which, once part of her estate, still perpetuates her name.

The attraction at Chingford is the church, a venerable ivy-covered ruin, situate on the brow of an elevated grave-yard, whence a prospect appears which well repays a morning's ramble. You look across the vale of the Lea far away into Middlesex and Hertfordshire—a great green expanse rising in the distance with a pale blue outline meeting the blue of the sky. "Merry Edmonton" is within sight, suggestive of Cowper's famous citizen; and beyond, your eye rests on that northern rampart of London from which Highgate looks down on the great city. Those broad meadows below us bear the name of King's Meads; the Lea was once spoken of as the King's river; and in the name of Chingford it is said we have King's-ford. And when turning round from time to time you look at the little church, the old hollow edifice much dilapidated, with a porch and low square tower, all thickly hung with ivy, you will be gratified by the near as by the distant.

One day while sauntering round the church-yard with a friend I accosted a boy who stood with his father looking at the prospect, and pointing to Edmonton, said, "That's the place Johnny Gilpin rode through so fast."

"Johnny Gilpin! who was he?"

"Of course, you know?" I said to the man, who had the appearance of a small farmer. But no, neither father nor son had ever heard of the civic hero.

Such entire ignorance of the popular ditty seemed

to me incredible, and I recited two or three stanzas to revive their memory. But in vain. They had never heard of the diverting history. Was that an average specimen of the bucolic mind of Essex? or was it a consequence of over-indulgence in the good tracts so lavishly disseminated of late? were questions which my friend and I discussed with some feeling of surprise as we walked away to Chingford Green.

From the Green there is a fine wild walk through the forest, where great trees rise giant-like above the surrounding wood, and heath and fern crackle beneath your foot, or you wind in and out among the thorns and tangle of a warren, and so past Queen Elizabeth's hunting-lodge, a tall red-brick building which wears a look of the Tudor time. Formerly it was much resorted to by pleasure-parties, who diverted themselves in the vicinity; but a clergyman has inclosed more than two hundred acres of the adjacent land, and so circumscribed the range. In all parts of the forest the same story of unauthorized encroachments is told. When Sir George Cockburn was Riding Forester, he rode through the forest continually with vigilant eye, and kept all the rides open. "Since his death that appointment has never been filled up, and several of the old forest rides and ways have been stopped." The rides and ways there mentioned had been open to the foot of all comers ever since the days when our first, second, and third King Henry granted charters of free warren in the Forest of Essex to the citizens of London, and instituted the Easter Hunt, which has been kept up as a hunting holiday in the same district for six hundred years.

Following a track from the Queen's Lodge we emerge by and by upon a high road, and take to the railway again at Buckhurst Hill station, or, as the forest folk call it, "Bucket's Hill." Clare in one of his sonnets writes:

> "There 's Bucket's Hill, a place of furze and clouds,
> Which evening in a golden blaze enshrouds;"

and so back to Woodford for a fresh excursion. We have just come from the north-west, and will now ramble to the north-east. Descending from the station to Woodford Bridge, and taking the right-hand road beyond the toll-bar, we mount presently to an elevation that overlooks the forest in all directions, from the hill-range that stretches away towards Epping on one side, to the vale of Thames on the other. To the left lies Chigwell, where King Harold once owned a manor; on the right the so-called forest of Hainault spreads far along the heights and down broad slopes to the level country beneath. We walk along its grassy margin among blackberry clumps, or under scattered oaks, and with the feeling which possesses us elsewhere, that the part of the forest we happen to be in seems always the best. Presently the view opens on the right; the Crystal Palace is seen; the vale of Thames opens, backed by the blue heights of Kent, under which we see a long gleaming curve of the royal river. And we can trace its course farther down by a sinuous line of hazy gray, which divides the green expanse. Where the water glistens you can see the smoke of steamers; and farther up the rim of the great city's smoky canopy.

Ere long we pass the *Bald Hind* on Grange Hill, whence a road descends to Fairlop Plain; and keeping on the highest ground we come to that fine, broad, green belt which, spreading between the road and the trees, beautifies Chigwell Row as with a most spacious lawn. Houses, standing back in well-kept inclosed gardens on one side, or peeping up from among the trees on the other, look as if they really merited the auctioneer's term, "desirable residences." To dwell in so pleasant a spot must indeed be a pleasure. There you may breathe the upland air, and feast your eye with ample prospects. And as you gaze across the far-stretching forest undulations, and the broad level region that spreads from the foot of the heights of Essex to the foot of the bolder heights of Kent, with the rounded elevations of Purfleet rising between, you will perhaps think that Essex is a much maligned county, and that Nature has not been niggardly towards it of interesting natural scenery.

The Row terminates on a green, where a little off the road stands the *Maypole Inn*, a small house with a big room projecting from one corner, which is much used during fine weather by Cockney dancing-parties. But though the house be small, the ale is good: country ale refreshing as pure air to a Londoner weary of the bad *Entire* that pervades not only the metropolis, but so many places in the surrounding counties. Perhaps some folk like London beer; but a holiday rambler who regards his health will shun it. So we take a sober glass at the *Maypole*, while cogitating on what we shall do next. A walk of five miles will bring us to Romford, whence we may journey home by

rail; or we can explore the slopes of Hainault, or extend our ramble to Havering-atte-Bower.

We choose the latter, and crossing the open green in an easterly direction, come to a drive in a corner of the forest which leads us to that happiest of accidents for wayfarers—a field-path. At the beginning of the century there was much open ground hereabouts, on which troops were often drilled and exercised; notably the dragoons and other regiments that went with Sir John Moore to Spain. The path undulates across pasture and plough-land, and overlooks extensive views of the vale of Thames, and at the end of about two miles brings us out on the Havering road, near the village which crowns the long gentle ascent. Gentle as it is, it commands a remarkable prospect, and turning at the *Orange Tree* tavern, we behold a great sea of smoke, from which rise chimneys, spires, and towers, and the great dome of St Paul's, with its ball and glittering cross. Now they stand up clear and distinct; now they are half concealed by the changeful murky clouds, which by increasing the vagueness of the prospect, seem to increase its vastness. It is an impressive sight, for we cannot help contrasting the gloom and noise, and multitudinous rushing to and fro of the great city, with the brightness, freshness, and rural quiet around us. The landlord of the tavern stepping to his door tells us the distance is fourteen miles by road to Whitechapel church.

A few houses and gardens, a little church with a large decayed-looking tower, and a thick cluster of ivy, and a green, comprise the pleasant village of Havering, an ancient demesne of the Saxon kings. I inquired,

but in vain, for the site of the royal residence or bower in which Edward the Confessor took such delight that he made it his chief resort, notwithstanding the disturbance to his devotions by the singing of nightingales. But as tradition tells, he prayed that the sweet music might be silenced; and from that time nightingales have never sung in the trees that grow around the place of the bower.

The origin of the name of the village is said to be *Have ring*, arising out of the incident represented on the carved screen of the Confessor's Chapel in Westminster Abbey, and recorded by the old chronicler, who tells us that one day as the King was riding to the consecration of a church, a fair old man came towards him and besought alms, in the name of God and St John the Evangelist, when the monarch, having nothing else at hand, gave him his ring. Some years after two English pilgrims in Palestine were entertained by a venerable-looking personage, who, on their departure, made himself known to them as the Evangelist, and charged them with a message—"Say ye unto Edward your Kyng," he said, "that I grete hym well by the token that he gaaf to me this ryng with his own handes at the halowyng of my chirche, which rynge ye shall deliver hym agayn; and say ye to him, that he dyspose his goodes, for wythin sixe moneths he shall be in the joye of heven wyth me, where he shall have his rewarde for his chastite and for his good lyvinge."

I have heard a rustic call the place *Haver*. If to that we add *ing*—meadow—we have a derivation much more likely to be true than the legendary one. The term *ing*, which prevails so largely in the north of Eng-

land, occurs in many parts of the south-east of Essex, as may be seen by examination of a map. *Ing-atte-stone* may be cited as a remarkable combination.

From Havering to Romford is a down-hill walk of three miles, pleasant enough till we come to the long park wall that deadens one side of the road, and supplies us with an excuse for grumbling, unless we choose to remember that near Romford was the birth-place of the old author whose quaint emblems and quintessence of meditation, as his biographer remarks, alliterate so well with the name of Quarles. But if a forest route be our choice, we descend the Romford road from the *Maypole* for about a mile, and there turn on the right into a drive across the low grounds of Hainault, a part of the forest, named, as is said, after the forest in Flanders from which it was stocked with deer.

Straight it runs, all green under-foot, between acres of hornbeams backed by taller trees—a most pleasant autumnal walk. Exquisite are the touches of colour then to be seen: tawny leafage above sprinkled lightly with amber; below, the rich brown and scarlet of the tangled brambles, patches of orange fungi, and pendents of ruddy berries—'ipsey-oys,' as children call them—glistening against the smooth gray stems. And many stems bearded from branch to root with short twigs that stand stiffly out, present a curious variety of form and colour. In the golden sunshine of a September afternoon you may here gladden heart and eye with scenes of rarest beauty.

Too soon, in perhaps half an hour, the scene changes, and we emerge from the trees upon Fairlop Plain, where Nature gives place to long straight drains

and fences and broad ploughed fields. These are the beginnings of "improvements" which are to be widely extended. Here was the meeting-place of the Easter Hunt: a good place, with enough of open ground and accessible cover. Here stood Fairlop oak, with stem forty-five feet in circumference, and branches spreading eighty feet in all directions, a very remarkable tree, under which many Londoners used to eat a dinner of beans and bacon, and had sports and pastimes which grew into a fair. The tree, resembling a huge umbrella in shape, stood until the beginning of the present century, when it fell, the fires of gipseys and frolickers having hastened the effects of age. The sound wood was converted into relics; and I have read somewhere that a portion of it is preserved in the pulpit carvings of St Pancras' Church.

In 1851, East and West Hainault Walks, as this part of the forest was called, comprised seventeen thousand acres, of which thirteen thousand were then already inclosed, and four thousand wastes and commons. All these have since been inclosed under an Act passed in that same year; the Crown was compensated for its "forestal rights" by the timber from a large area, and a certain number of acres, which now yield a revenue to the office of Woods and Forests of £4000 a year,—eight times as much as it was before the inclosure. At the same time fifty acres were set apart in Chigwell parish for "recreative purposes."

There are some of the so-called truths of political economy which no man can believe unless he be one of those grim Calvinists who justify the burning of Servetus; and one of them is, that the inclosure of

"waste" land is an unmitigated benefit to the community. Is land, indeed, waste because it forms no portion of a lord of the manor's park or pastures, or contributes nothing to increase of money? Is material gain so much more worth consideration than moral? and is not the privilege to roam at will over thousands of wild acres something that may fairly be set against an augmentation of revenue? Nature owns no waste in her economy; but we are told that nature must give way to civilization. Yet if ever there were a case in which some allowance should be made for Nature, it is when the moral interests of a great city are involved. The "adequate portion of the forest" which the parliamentary committee would "secure for the purposes of health and recreation" would be a very unsatisfactory substitute for the unrestricted range we have so long enjoyed. What is the privilege of walking in acres where if you stray but a few yards to right or left you see the envious fence, to that of rambling in an open forest where, if you will, you may avoid sight of the fences which property has set up on the confines, during a whole day. Portions once "secured" must be taken care of, and dressed and drained till all the charm of wildness is trimmed out of them. Where then is the pleasure of sauntering hither and thither among ferns and weeds, and in soft spongy places where the shade is damp and cool, and the grass and mosses are always green, and you may gather many water plants, and discover reptiles and insects, which civilization is sure to drive away? Where the pleasure of following up the course of a little brook, its pretty ins and outs, gravelly shallows, beds of

cresses, small green bluffs, and tiny islets; now lingering in some small grassy basin, now glimmering in the thicket, and under the heavy branches which hang so low that you must stoop to pass beneath them? Whither shall the botanists and entomologists resort who are found among the working-men of London, when Epping Forest shall be entirely disafforested? At present they can reach it by a morning's walk, and well do they appreciate the privilege of choosing for themselves in what swamp, or glade, or leafy nook they will prosecute their search. And grant that among the holiday-seekers there are hundreds who abuse the privilege, whose pastime is dissolute and deplorable, we must remember that in the crowded alleys and narrow streets of eastern London their dissoluteness, if less boisterous, would be more objectionable.

Surely, we may hope that the moral element will prevail in the settlement of the question, and that those seven thousand acres will be set apart as a free forest for ever.

Dating from 1226, when Henry III. gave the charter, the Easter Hunt, though degenerated in practice, is one of those time-honoured customs which many persons would like to see maintained. Among the numerous links which connect the days of Armstrong guns and matchless rifles with the days of bows and arrows, and merry rovers in Lincoln green, it may be regarded as characteristic to find a sporting link. In former years the Fathers of the city used to go down to the forest at Easter, with some show of dignity, attended by "Common Hunt," one of their functionaries so designated. At times the attendants would cut up

the skin of the captured animal into small sections, and sell them as trophies at a good price. But a change took place. Perhaps the hunting of a tame deer provided for the occasion became less interesting than hunting a wild one. At any rate, the old custom degenerated into a noisy holiday for tens of thousands "the roughest of the rough" who thronged in eager expectation to Fairlop Plain.

It happened one Easter that a deer had not been provided; whereupon the disappointed sportsmen hunted and killed one of the wild deer of the forest. The verderer, as a witness testifies, was "very angry" at such a daring innovation on the usual practice, and he instituted an inquiry into the law of the case; but he found that the civic Nimrods had not overstepped their rights and privileges, as laid down in the old charters. The hunt now meets at Buckhurst Hill; and Fairlop Fair is held near a *Maypole* inn at Barking side.

As evidence that the hunt was a well-known custom, one of the witnesses enlivens his dry statements by a little tale which, though told in the queer Blue Book English in which all the witnesses of whatever degree, express themselves, will bear quotation. "Lord Brougham," he states, "was staying at Theobald's, at Mr Henry Meux's, and went on Easter Monday to witness the hunt, and was very facetious, asking a great many questions about the hunt. He said to a man, 'I suppose you are waiting for the Lord Mayor and aldermen? If you will show me the Lord Mayor and aldermen when they arrive, I will give you a crown.' The man answered, 'I do not think I should justly know them, but if you will give me half a crown I will show you

Lord Brougham alive.' This so disconcerted his Lordship that he went home immediately." Was it so easy to disconcert the man who could command the ear of the House of Commons, and objurgate the Lords?

Returned to Woodford station either by way of Barking side or Grange Hill, we journey on to Loughton, where the railway, which is extending to Epping and Ongar, terminates for the present amid hills and hollows that rise and fall on all sides, thickly covered with wood, diversified here and there by grassy openings. To Loughton Hall the Princess Anne of Denmark retired during the troubles of 1688. The village, scattered along the vale, is rural of aspect, except near the station, where taverns on the Shoreditch model and Cockney refreshment houses dispel all sylvan illusions. It appears to be a favourite resort. One Sunday evening (in 1863) the station-master told me the number of visitors during the day was thirteen thousand. Hundreds besides would have alighted at the stations on the way down from Fenchurch Street. Hence we may imagine the large numbers who week after week during the summer season seek recreation in Epping Forest.

The walk from Loughton to High Beech, about two miles, leads us through one of the best parts of the forest. The road curves up a long ascent between the trees; but we may avoid it if silence and solitude attract us, and strike a north-westerly course under the leaves where hornbeams grow thickly among the larger trees. At times, from a rise we get a half-view of great hilly sweeps of low wood; or a hollow hems us in with dense foliage, where the gray stems glisten in

the sun, and fern grows knee deep, and spongy patches compel us to diverge into ragged openings in which brambles, honeysuckle, wild roses, and rushes captivate our eye and hinder our feet. How soothing it is to retreat into these lonesome places from the noise of tea-houses, and swings, horses and donkeys and their drivers.

We cross a road or two on the way, and after climbing a bold slope emerge upon a gravelly table-land of heath and bracken—the summit of High Beech. Here grows an ancient beech, and near it stands the *King's Oak*, a public-house, which attracts multitudes of visitors who have journeyed down from London in the big pleasure-vans that are drawn up in disorderly array on the edge of the common. Even on Sundays the place is as noisy as a fair, and here and there quarrelling succeeds to hilarity, and lewd and profane talk to friendly greetings, and women quite overcome are led away to the "wan" to sleep themselves sober. "I tell ye I did n't," exclaimed a lady in an after-dinner group as I passed. "I tell ye I did n't, 't was Mrs Jackson as emptied the bottle. She can take a drop o' gin, she can, comfortabler than any woman I ever see." Meanwhile, another group burst into shrieks and vociferations around a "poor thing took bad with a fit of sterrups." And on the road loud shouts salute the reckless riders of horse-races; for here the Sunday is not a day of rest for horses. How easily liberty degenerates into license. With few exceptions similar scenes may be witnessed at all the public-houses of the forest.

It is a relief to walk away to the brow of the common, whence the ground falls in grand slopes to the

broad region of woods and fields beneath. The elevation, though, according to the Ordnance Survey, not more than about three hundred and sixty feet, commands a wide and beautiful prospect. We see again the vale of Lea and Enfield, and Waltham with its ancient abbey, and the flanks of the hill dotted with agreeable residences peeping up here and there from the trees. Miles of forest stretch away before us to the north and west. Near the hill-foot is Dick Turpin's cave: once a hiding-place for the notorious highwayman; now a "sort of hole." It was somewhere among those thickets that one of the verderers lately saw nine or ten deer, wild deer of the forest, all that are left of the once numerous herd.

The holiday-folk are not all of the boisterous class. In looking down the slope on a sunshiny day, you may see families scattered under the trees, enjoying the scene and their repast in the open air. A spring to which the children run from time to time supplies them with excellent water. A few years ago, the steward and bailiff of the lord of the manor, fouled and stopped up the spring, to check picnics on the slope, and "force" visitors to the *King's Oak*—their master's house. But such urgent complaints were made, that the authorities of the forest interfered, and ordered the restoration of the spring; and Sir Charles Wake disavowed the acts of his servants.

There are thousands of Londoners who take long and wearisome excursion trips to see places far less beautiful than these glorious forest views which lie within a dozen miles of the city. If variety be their desire it awaits them here, in shadow and sunshine, bold

heights and breezy slopes, and masses of leafage stretching away, mile after mile, in broad undulations.

To the intellectual rambler, High Beech offers another charm—for it is classic ground. On these pleasant slopes Alfred Tennyson wrote *Locksley Hall.* Beech Hill house, at which he was a visitor, has since been pulled down; and another dwelling occupies its site; yet we may find pleasure in associating the neighbourhood with a poem which searches out the tenderest and noblest sympathies in the hearts of all who read it. We may fancy the cogitative walks during which the stream of thought flowed into harmonious verse: when as the Laureate writes,—

"Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west;
Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid."

And many a night had his eye beheld in the south-western sky the glare which in the poem appears as

"The light of London flaring like a dreary dawn."

Perhaps it is of good augury that we meet thus early in our travel with so interesting an association.

John Clare, the peasant-poet, was once the inmate of an asylum on Fairmead, about a mile south of the *King's Oak.* There in the unrestrained treatment that prevailed, he enjoyed for a time happy days, and felt the soothing effects of natural beauty on mental malady. He felt too the charm of the forest, as appears in many of his pieces, among which is the sonnet—

"I loved the Forest walks and beechen woods,
Where pleasant Stockdale show'd me far away
Wild Enfield chase, and pleasant Edmonton;
While giant London, known to all the world,
Was nothing but a guess among the trees,
Though only half a day from where we stood.
Such is ambition! only great at home,
And hardly known to quiet and repose.
I loved the Forest walk, and often stood
To hear boys halloo to their wilder sheep;
While quiet Turner sat upon a hill,
And gentle Howard cut his sticks and sang,
The sticker trail'd her faggot on the ground,
And all the Forest seemed to live with joy."

Did the memory of these happy days ever come to the rustic bard to cheer him in his age within the walls of the asylum at Northampton?

But pleasant as the forest is, we must not loiter too long amid its sylvan charms if we are to explore the scenes that lie beyond. So at a brisk pace we walk northwards to the *Wake Arms*, an inn from which five roads diverge. One of them leads to Epping, about two miles farther; and we need not hesitate about going thither, for trees border the whole of the way, with abundant choice of shady paths underneath; and it may be we shall fancy this the very finest part of the forest, so magnificent are the trees, so diversified is the undergrowth, so broad the leafy range. On the right of the road an ancient earthwork, Ambresbury banks, is still traceable: the last stronghold of Cassibelanus, from which he was driven by the conquering Romans. About a mile to the left is Copt Hall, a well-known seat on the cap or brow of a hilly

park, which commands so fine a view that whoever beholds it will admire the choice of the abbots of Waltham who once had a pleasaunce there. Presently we find ourselves among yet grander trees, where the edge of the wood looks park-like, and ponds with mossy banks gleam strangely in the dusky light, and reflect wonderful images of leaning trunks and overhanging boughs, and the high flickering roof of twigs and leaves. Then we enter on Epping Green, and get broad views to the south-east with impression of a pleasant neighbourhood. Those families who sojourn here for their summer holiday make no ill choice. A little farther and there is the rural town, mostly one long street, with stripes and patches of grass, and trees and gardens here and there in front of the houses, and an ugly chapel of ease near its southern extremity. The parish church is at Epping Upland, about two miles distant on the left. The trade for which the town was once famous has not yet died out, for you may see SAUSAGE MAKER among the signs; but whether the article is prepared now as in the days when the stage-coach called at the Whitechapel butcher's for a basket of scraps of meat, and brought them back next morning converted into Epping sausages, is a question on which I have no evidence.

With Epping as our head-quarters, for a few days we might indulge in some interesting historical reminiscences and take a few pleasant excursions. Ludlow tells us in his *Memoirs* about the time that the Lord Protector was near his end: "on the Monday afternoon, I set forward on my journey, the morning proving so tempestuous that the horses were not able to draw

against it; so that I could reach no farther than Epping that night." That tempest was the requiem of the Commonwealth.

Greenstead, a village about six miles to the east, is worth a visit because of its remarkable church, which is said to have been built for the temporary reception of the corpse of St Edmund during its conveyance from London to Bury. The length of the little edifice is under thirty feet, and the walls, formed of rough oaken slabs, are less than six feet high to the spring of the roof. That such a relic of the primitive church and of Saxon carpentry should still exist must be regarded as an especial instance of the "tender care and favour of antiquitie."

About nine miles to the north-east, environed by cheerful agricultural landscapes, at High Laver, stands another church, to which a thoughtful few have made a pilgrimage in our days. There John Locke, the Christian philosopher, was buried, in 1704, and the tablet bearing an epitaph in Latin, composed by himself, still hangs somewhat dilapidated on the wall. Mrs Austin, who saw the place in 1850, mentions a tradition as existing there that Newton had once visited Locke's tomb, and referring to the dispute between the two philosophers, she asks, "Was this a sort of expiatory pilgrimage?" And Oates is not far off, where Locke resided for the last ten years of his life, in the house of Sir Francis and Lady Masham; but the house was pulled down sixty years ago.

For the present we go no farther into Essex, and some weeks will pass before we travel into other parts of the county, and compare and connect them with

what we have seen in the region nearest to London. Arriving once more at the *Wake Arms* we stand a moment to choose our homeward route: there is the road over Golding's Hill to Loughton; the road to Woodford, and the road to Waltham; all pleasant and bordered by wood; but our choice is the latter. So turning sharp to the right we descend the long gentle slope between breadths of forest, and see throngs of Londoners romping around *Woodbine Cottage*, by Honey Lane—a green at the northern foot of High Beech; then leaving the forest behind, in another half-hour we come to Waltham, a place that invites attention: for here King Harold was buried in the abbey he had built; here racy old Fuller and Bishop Hall were once "curates;" here Fox wrote greater part of his *Book of Martyrs*. But we look in vain for Harold's tomb, "one pedestal whereof," writes Fuller, "I have in my house."

Holy Rood of Waltham! was once an English battle cry. To contain that cross which was found miraculously, a church was built here in the days of Canute. So many pilgrims resorted to it that Harold built a large and magnificent abbey, which was consecrated May 3, 1060, and though it underwent great alterations in the reign of Henry II., and a patchwork tower has replaced the one that fell three hundred years ago, there are portions of the original edifice yet remaining: most venerable relics. They will perhaps stand for centuries to come, for the nave has been restored, and is now used as the parish church. In the unrestored parts some of the niches are faced with flint, and patches of flint and red brick of a later day make a

curious picture of the old walls. Sculptured head-stones and pretentious tombs abound in the church-yard, contrasting with a living memorial—the huge pollard elm which stands near the pathway, pleasantly overshadowing the aged gossips and young children who sit on the bench round about its rugged stem.

One Sunday morning that I came here, the hand-bills of a few weeks previous were yet remaining at the entrance, announcing a sermon to be preached by the Bishop of Ripon on the "eight hundred and second anniversary of King Harold's abbey church." Very solemn seemed to me the suggestion embodied in that short sentence, of the many generations which had come and gone since the consecration was celebrated by priests of the Saxon tongue.

A volunteer corps filled most of the seats on the morning above-mentioned, and as I saw them taking part in the service my emotions were stirred by the thought that, notwithstanding the Conquest and the lapse of ages, the same heroic spirit that urged the last of the Saxon kings to the defence of his native land still survives, ready to answer England's appeal to her sons.

While crossing the Lea and the railway bridge we get a view of the neighbourhood, in which amid much verdure appear the powder-mills, that make the name of Waltham known to many a one who never heard of the abbey. During the last century, when the practice of appealing to the Royal Society in all cases of doubt and difficulty concerning mechanical works and science had not yet fallen into disuse, the Society were solicited more than once by the Waltham powder-makers to

decide on the precautions to be used against accident. The greenness is of older date, for the meadows are watered by the "septemfluous stream," as Fuller calls the Lea, because of its branches; and the grass, as he relates, was "so sweet and lushious to cattle," that the time of grazing for newly entered beasts was limited to half an hour a day, lest they should die from overfeeding.

Before descending to the station let us go a little way into Hertfordshire, and visit Waltham Cross, where by the road-side stands one of the elaborate and beautiful crosses which King Edward erected to honour the memory of Eleanor of Castile. We admire the elaborate and beautiful workmanship the more because of the sentiment with which it is invested: the affection of a great king for the *chère reyne*, who on a memorable occasion in Palestine had sucked the poison from his wounded arm. A royal grief, expressing itself in a way that appeals at once to our sympathies and to our love of the picturesque.

The Cross is placed somewhat inconveniently at the angle where three ways meet. The figure of the deceased queen is repeated in the niches on the three sides, her Spanish origin being indicated by the shields in some of the panels bearing the arms of Castile and Leon. The *fleur de lis* is a frequent ornament, besides much carving, which draws your eye upwards to the graceful finials. It is in good preservation, protected by an iron railing, the townsfolk having resisted the persuasions offered more than once for its removal. In the wall of the *Falcon Inn*, adjoining, there is some old carved work which looks as if it might have orna-

mented the house at the time when Queen Eleanor's corpse was borne past in funereal procession.

We must not forget that Waltham Cross is the dwelling-place of an author, who as traveller and novelist ranks deservedly high in popular esteem—Anthony Trollope. His house, one of the old fashion, is situate on the left, as you walk from the Cross towards London.

CHAPTER III.

Hurrying on—A Pause at Ely—Throwing out the Mail-bags—Emblematic Carpentry—From Canute to Cobbett—Tom Paine, Kett the "Rebel," and Sir Thomas Gresham—Norwich—A Drive—A Supper at Sunrise—An unseen Entertainer.

But where is our train? Towns and villages in Hertfordshire on our left, in Essex on our right, have twinkled in our eyes for an instant and disappeared: we have crossed the petty streams of Stort and Cam, and passed Audley End, the stately residence of Lord Braybrooke, whose park offers such a pleasant approach to the old rural town of Saffron Walden. This north-western corner of Essex, as viewed from the castle hill in that ancient borough, displays gentle undulations covered with parks and farms far as eye can reach, whereto the saying seems well applied, "good elm, good barley; good oak, good wheat." The University town with its gaslights and sudden noise and bustle at the station, and the Devil's Dyke, that legendary boundary between East Anglia and Mercia, are left behind, and we have come to Ely and touched upon the great level of the fens: a district so peculiar of aspect that we shall take pleasure in a leisurely exploration of its northern borders in the course of our travel. While the large heap of mail-bags is being

thrown out for transport to the north-east by a shorter route than ours, let us walk away to the end of the platform and look around. There, rising dimly from the dark irregular mass of trees and houses, we see Alan de Walsingham's Cathedral tower, that masterpiece of carpentry concerning which Fuller remarks, "when the bells ring, the woodwork thereof shaketh and gapeth (no defect, but perfection of structure), and exactly chocketh into the joynts again; so that it may pass for the lively embleme of the sincere Christian, who, though he hath *motum trepidationis*, of fear and trembling, stands firmly fixt on the basis of a true faith." Modern architects have crowned it with a lantern, which will become one of the links in a history that dates from the Heptarchy; includes the holy life of St Etheldreda; the stealing of St Withburga's corpse under cover of night from the vault at Dereham; and strides of architecture until here stood a magnificent abbey in which the feasting was so magnificent that, as the monkish chronicler describes,—

> "See after other Ely feasts, and surely thou wilt say
> That having seen the night before thou seest now the day."

Then King Canute, who while his boatmen rowed past the Isle heard the sweet singing of the monks of Ely; and last the Camp of Refuge, which baffled the Norman conqueror for years after he wore the English Crown: and, if truth were unimportant, many more particulars might be included; for, as Speed observes, "antiquity is allowed with such general applause, that known untruths many times are pleasing unto many."

Seen from the station by daylight Ely is an amphibious-looking place—houses, meadows, and water strangely intermingled, and masked and fringed by willows: a sight which, if you are going to Peterborough, prepares you for the forty miles of fen traversed by the railway.

From Canute to Cobbett is a long stride, but the throwing out of the mail-bags allows us time for reminiscence. "I was particularly desirous," says the sturdy Radical in his *Eastern Tour*, "to have a little political preaching at Ely, the place where the flogging of the English local militia under a guard of German bayonets cost me so dear,"—a thousand pounds fine, and imprisonment in Newgate. To us in these days of penny newspapers and free discussion, it seems hardly possible that such an incident could take place in the present century.

In the phraseology of almanacs there is "no real night" at midsummer-tide, so as the train sped onwards I could discern the long low undulations where thin stripes of firs relieve great breadths of fern: the miles of pasture through which creeps the Little Ouse scarcely below the level of its banks: a vast monotonous landscape that impresses the mind as the calm sea on a hazy night.

On speeds the train. No hill hides the view. On past the region of blowing sands where farms have been inundated by the light dust, as the old cities in the valley of the Nile. Presently Brandon is passed; anon Thetford, where Tom Paine was born and educated, and here the train no longer skirting the edge plunges in towards the heart of the county. Then

Attleborough reminds us of a beautiful church; and Wymondham (or Wyndham) that William Kett the "rebel" was hanged on its church-tower. A little farther and at a distance on the right is Intwood, the residence of that worthy Knight Sir Thomas Gresham: in his Hall there he entertained Dudley Earl Warwick when on his way to put down the Rising in Norfolk. Then as the thin darkness began to steal away before the gray gleam of earliest dawn the train stopped at Norwich.

There stood the promised dog-cart, and a groom tightly buttoned up. For my part I shivered with cold, and was right glad when having driven through the sleeping city, which then and in subsequent visits seemed to me mean-looking, and up the hill beyond, and between level fields, at which I looked eagerly as my foretaste of Norfolk landscapes, we came half an hour later to a large cluster of trees, passed a square embattled church-tower, turned into a lane, and arrived at Horsford vicarage. I cautioned the groom against disturbance; he took me in by the back way, lowered a shutter, and showed me a supper placed ready on the dining-room table, and creeping up-stairs to the first landing, pointed out the door of my bed-room. How beautifully the east brightened with red and gold while I ate my supper, and proved the excellence of Norwich ale! It seemed a shame to turn away from the growing splendours; but sleep would not be put off. I stole noiselessly up-stairs, and went to bed in the house of a gentleman whom I had not yet seen.

CHAPTER IV.

Making acquaintance—Pleasant Quarters—St Faith's—Significant Splays—A Norfolk Landscape—Old and new Aspects—Excursions—The Hurricane—Queer Dialect—Brandeston Hall—A Churchy County—The Duellists—A choice specimen of Scenery—Heydon—The Earles and the Bulwers—Morton Hall—Benefit for Birds—The Wensum—A Clerical Captain — Inexorable Lawyer — Blickling Hall — Anna Boleyn—A Royal Progress—Sall Church—Booton—Another Clerical Volunteer—A Visit of Curiosity—Costessey—Old House and New—Wood-sawing in the Wood — Taverham — *The Times* Paper-Mill — Something to wonder at—Conversion of Vile Rags into Pure Pulp—Half-stuff — The Machine-Room — From Pulp to Paper — Careful Feeding—The Packing-Room—Tons of Reams.

THE church bells were chiming when I woke, but I appeared down-stairs in time to salute the Vicar and initiate acquaintance as he was setting off for morning service. Acquaintance with the house and its environment followed: a modest parsonage, with casement windows, a bay at one end relieving the squareness, the front adorned with tall clustering roses and luxuriant hops, looking across a lawn, flower-beds, and shrubbery, through an opening in the trees, to fields, woods, and pale blue distance, was a sight pleasing in itself, and promising of quiet enjoyment. What with the orchard and the flanking groups of tall beech and birch, of limes and firs and weeping ash, where in early summer birds sing all day and half the night,

the place is prettily sheltered. In the opening grows a picturesque old oak, and beyond, about a mile away, the square tower of St Faith's rises darkly against the sky. Very pleasant quarters, I thought, while walking to and fro.

In the afternoon the Vicar had to officiate at St Faith's, and there I heard him preach, and the people sing, led by a very rustic choir of boys and girls, whose shrill voices rivalled the loud clarionet. Such ear-piercing music was to me a novelty, as was also the baptism of two or three babies forming part of the service before the sermon. But in Norfolk this is the common practice.

The church, with thatched roof and tall square tower built mostly of flint, is one of those respectable-looking edifices of which we shall see many in Norfolk—a county of seven hundred and fifty parishes. Some time ago, the churchwardens, observing that the columns and arches of the nave and the clerestory walls leaned outwards on each side, placed four stout iron bars across to prevent a further giving way, as they thought, not knowing that some churches have been built purposely with the sides of the nave out of perpendicular. The chancel windows have such deep broad splays as would perhaps move the old symbolist to repeat his precept—"Let the splayed window remind thee to close thy heart against the evil that cometh from without, and open it wide to the good that springeth within."

My earliest exercise the next morning was to thrust myself up the narrow winding stair to the top of Horsford church tower, there being no hill in the

neighbourhood. I was curious to see a wider extent of Norfolk, and was gratified by a view which takes in Cromer Light to the east, the spire of Norwich cathedral shooting up from the deep basin that conceals the city, and the broad mass of woods sheltering Lord Stafford's park at Costessy (or Cossey), to the west. It is a peculiar landscape, made up of long, low, green and yellow undulations, with black curves here and there showing the tracts of unreclaimed heath. These are relieved by long white roads, belts and clumps of wood, hedgerows, bright patches of swamp, dull patches of rushes, not a few church towers and windmills, and a sprinkling of red roofs. The impression made upon the mind by such a landscape is that the elements of beauty are discoverable more in the particular than the general effect.

The change effected in the aspect of the county by cultivation and inclosure since the days when Walpole wrote his letters to Horace Mann, must be great. Houghton, his estate, lies about twenty miles west of Horsford, the intervening country being similar in appearance to that across which we have looked from the tower. "Consider," says the minister in one of his letters, "I am in the barren land of Norfolk, where news grow as slow as anything green." And again, "It is very unpleasant to be prisoner in a melancholy barren province, which would put one in mind of the deluge, only that we have no water." But in another place, after a visit to some of his relatives, he acknowledges a touch of beauty. "You know," he writes, "I am not prejudiced in favour of the country, nor like a place because it bears turnips well, or because you may

gallop over it without meeting a tree: but I really was charmed with Woolterton; it is all wood and water."

But if deficient in decorative elements, Norfolk enjoyed, and still enjoys, in common with Suffolk, a reputation for breeding more turkeys than all the rest of the kingdom, and prodigious numbers of geese. There was one season in our fathers' days, not yet forgotten, when three hundred flocks of turkeys, each comprising a few hundred, passed over Stratford Bridge on their way from East Anglia to London. The geese were driven up just after harvest, so that they might feed on the stubble. Now the occupation of the gooseherd is gone, for the birds are transported to the metropolis by Great Eastern railway. In the Christmas week of 1863 there arrived at the terminus in Shoreditch nearly seventeen thousand geese and thirteen thousand turkeys.

Elderly folk who remember the spectacle presented by the stage coaches laden with Christmas fare sigh for the days that are past, when puddings and chines testified of rural hospitality. But now

> "No Norfolk turkeys load the wagon
> Which once the horses scarce could drag on;
> And, to increase the weight with these,
> Came their attendant sausages."

Then followed days of excursions, in which the Vicar showed that he had not forgotten one of the feats of his college life—driving tandem, and I became familiar with the aspect of the country for a dozen miles around. These drives and walks confirmed my

first impression that if Norfolk appears dull and monotonous to a passing traveller, it nevertheless repays him who lingers here and there to explore with views of a peculiar kind of beauty which becomes the more interesting the more it is studied. The artists of the county have discovered it, as may be seen with admiration at the annual exhibition of the Art Union in Norwich.

On our way to Brandeston we drove through two or three miles of fir-woods, and saw great curving gaps in which lay hundreds of fallen trees, blown down at the previous Whitsuntide by that terrible hurricane which sunk many a Yarmouth fisherman to the bottom of the sea, and moved the tender heart of England to pity and succour. "When last come last," said a rustic to whom I spoke about the devastation, "it 'll take years to right-side it." To right-side is a local word used by high and low to signify setting in order. And your true Norfolkian of the rural class always omits the *s* from the third person singular: "he come," "she walk," "this one look better 'n that," being the usual phraseology. *Have* he pronounces *hev*, and the vowels generally are clipped and drawled in a way that astonishes a stranger. "Ye'll see th' esh lay on left hand, the uk on right," said the rustic above mentioned, referring to ash and oak; and I heard one of the guests at a tithe-dinner account for the decay of one of the local families, by "There wasn't naw ishy" (no issue). A baw (boy) if asked to open a gate will most likely answer, "I'm a-gawin' tew" (a-going to).

At Brandeston Hall, the Vicar, doing the honours of his own house, showed me the oak carvings and panel

work, and the old oak bedstead in which, when it stood in Middleham castle, Richard of Gloster is said to have slept. It now stands always ready for the guest who occupies the spare room, or should he have a romantic desire to be even more uncomfortable he may pack himself into a hiding-place in one of the walls, the secret of which is known to but few.

Great is the contrast between Northumberland and Norfolk: there you may wander a whole day and not see a church, here it is difficult to find a landscape without a church. The towers are well-built of Barnack stone and flint, and rise commonly square and massive to a height of sixty, eighty, or one hundred feet: conspicuous objects from miles around. The roofs, or 'ruffs' in the vernacular, are mostly thatched with the reeds which grow so abundantly in the eastern parts of the county, and are finished along the ridge with a thick cap or layer of straw, called the 'rooving.' To say but a few words about each church seen during travel in Norfolk would be to compose an ecclesiology.

Another of our trips was to Heydon, the seat of the Bulwers. On the way, by the side of the road leading from Norwich to Holt, a stone placed within the edge of a plantation commemorates the duel arising out of an electioneering quarrel, in which Sir Henry Hobart, Gentleman of the Horse to William III. and ancestor of the Earls of Buckinghamshire, was killed by Mr Oliver Le Neve. A little farther and we came to a wood into which the Vicar drove, being anxious to show me a Norfolk forest. Before then I had doubted whether the county grew a wood large enough for the "Babes" to lose themselves in; but here was breadth

enough and to spare, and such masses of foliage above, such a crowd of mossy stems, and beds of tall ferns and tangle and rushes, as justified the Vicar's pride in what he called a choice specimen of Norfolk scenery.

Heydon is a village built around a green, with a handsome church-tower on one side, and on the other the *Bulwer Arms*, a public-house which besides the sign displays on its front a carved female figure carrying a basket and staff. This is said to have been the figure-head of a ship in which one of the Earle family, predecessors of the Bulwers, used to sail. The member for Norwich in the Long Parliament was Erasmus Earle, one of the ablest lawyers of his day and Cromwell's serjeant. The house, Heydon Hall, standing in a park adjoining the village green, was built in 1581, and exhibits the characteristics of the time: gables and pediments, and ranges of bay windows, and oriels; all looking very picturesque amid the grand elms and sycamores of the park.

"No one," said the Vicar, "could appreciate Norfolk aright who had not seen the view from the terrace of Morton Hall," the residence of the Berneys; a name of frequent occurrence in the *Paston Letters*, and old history of the county. So thither we drove one morning, and I found it truly a pleasant place. The park, rising with a bold hill-slope from the river, is crowned by a terrace which, running along the front and two sides of the Hall, looks into the valley of the Wensum, where wood, water, and a surface full of gentle heights and hollows form one of the most pleasing views in the county: very different from the scenery traversed

by the stream when it loses its identity in the Yare. The "prophetic eye of taste" has been so exercised in the planting as to heighten the general effect by contrasts of form and colour, which allure the beholder's eye from the glen-like dip of foliage immediately beneath the terrace, to the gray willows by the shining curves of the river, and the dark range of the Deakle fir-woods on the opposite side of the valley. In some of the largest trees nearest to the Hall, tubs and casks are placed in the forks as breeding-places for jackdaws and owls, and boxes here and there for blackbirds and starlings; for the owner, in common with the veteran naturalist Waterton, encourages the birds of the air to inhabit near his dwelling.

"O Blackbird! sing me something well:
While all the neighbours shoot thee round,
I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground
Where thou may'st warble, eat and dwell."

On this and on a subsequent visit, when the autumnal tints lay warm and rich upon the woods, the Vicar and I were made aware that hospitality to the birds implied the exercise of generous hospitality within the walls.

In the old English word *wende*, to turn, we perhaps have the origin of the name Wensum, as now applied to this pretty winding stream. At Norwich it mingles with the Yare, which flows thence through flat meadows to the sea.

One day I was made over to the care of a neighbouring vicar, whose reputation as a captain of volunteers is an example to the Church Militant. He drove

first to Aylsham, a pleasant little town, which in the palmy days of its linen trade was famous for 'Aylsham webs'—where he called on a man of law to ask leave for a visit to Blickling—the residence of the Marquis of Lothian. But the agent was inexorable. There was an artist at work in the house, and the Marquis had left orders that he should not be disturbed. So on arrival at the place we had to content ourselves with a sight of the stately old house-front, and a drive in the park. Even to see the outside of a Tudor house is worth a few miles' journey—especially in genial company; and Blickling with its antique gables and wings, mullioned windows, and bright green lawn inclosed by a dark yew hedge, is one of those interesting memorials of feudal England which we prize more and more in the flight of years. To remember that Anna Boleyn went forth from those panelled chambers to become Queen of England will afford us a sufficient indication of its age.

Charles II. came here with his queen in 1671, during a progress in which they visited other great houses in Norfolk, and fared sumptuously, as the following passage intimates:

> "Paston and Hobart did bring up the meat,
> Who the next day, at their own houses treat,
> Paston to Oxnead did his sovereign bring,
> And like Araunah, offer'd as a king.
> Blickling 2 monarchs and 2 queens has seen,
> One king fetch'd thence, another brought a queen,
> Great Townshend of the treats brought up the rear,
> And doubly was my Lord-Lieutenant there."

The park—a thousand acres—is diversified by gen-

tle undulations; a long broad lake; noble trees, and flourishing woods, in one of which stands a pyramidal mausoleum to the memory of John Hobart, Earl of Buckinghamshire, who died in 1793.

Among the church-towers which we saw while driving homewards was that of Sall (pronounced Saul), where tradition assigns the burial-place of the hapless Anna. For long years a black marble slab in the floor of the nave was pointed out as the covering of the vault in which her body was laid after the sad procession which, quitting the Tower by night, bore it back to its native earth. But within the present century the slab was raised and the vault examined. A skeleton was found therein, but its head had not been cut off.

The sight of Booton tower reminded us of a whilom editor of the *Quarterly*, and we began to talk about him. "I know him well," said my companion, "he is one of my most zealous volunteers. Would you like to see him?"

See him? Of course I would. The horse's head was turned towards the church-tower; but presently the vicar asked, "But what do you want to say to him?"

The question set me thinking whether I had really anything to say that would justify an encroachment on a clergyman's time and patience, and I had to confess to myself that simple curiosity alone prompted me. I had once heard that when Lockhart wrote his farewell letter on giving up editorial charge of the same periodical, he declared himself to have been

> "Over-worked, over-worried,
> Over-Croker'd, over-Murray'd;"

and I wanted to see how a man looked who had gone through the same severe experience and survived it. Perhaps if I had confessed this openly, the vicar would have thought it an insufficient motive.

The minister of Booton dwells not far from his church, in a cheerful-looking red-brick gabled house designed and planned by himself. He was not at home: we should find him, said the servant, at the house of a sick parishioner. We drove thither: he came out, and I had the pleasure to make acquaintance with a gentleman whose active form and bright eye showed no traces of the toilsome years he had passed in making publisher and contributors pull handsomely in harness. No lack of talk prevailed during our ten minutes' interview, and when we shook hands at parting it was with a wish to see each other again.

One afternoon in a walk of about ten miles we visited a park and a paper-mill. Costessey, or Cossey, to use the local name, Lord Stafford's estate, afforded us a view of another portion of the valley of the Wensum, and the river flowing with shallow and lively current between the pleasant undulations of the park. It is one of those places where you may compare two fashions of domestic architecture; for the old Hall—a low, unpretending edifice, such as would have suited a modest country squire, has not been pulled down. The new mansion, situate nearer the river, has a lofty imposing aspect; but when on viewing it from all sides you discover a portion with naked walls, and large unglazed mullioned windows, looking as if it were never to be finished, as if some influence of the old attainder still prevailed, you

will the more appreciate the preservation of the old Hall with its corbie-step gables, porch and parvise, all coated though it be with yellow wash. In our stroll through the plantations we saw a travelling steam-engine driving a circular saw that cut up fir-stems into blocks for paving the stables with a speed that would have convinced even stubborn pit-sawyers of the economy of steam-power, especially when brought to the timber.

We tasted the ale at the *Falcon* (the Stafford crest) and walked away to Taverham, a small retired village which, though quiet enough in itself, contributes in no small degree to the talk and uproar of the world; for there a large portion of the paper on which *The Times* is printed is manufactured. The mill, comprising a considerable extent of low ranges of building, stands in a park-like flat by the side of the Wensum; and the tall chimney-shafts of white brick seen from far amid trees and backed by woods, suggest a pleasing combination of industry and rurality. The prospect moreover includes Taverham Hall—a new house in the Tudor style—and the church and parsonage with a pretty garden bordering the stream.

I repeat here my thanks for the favour of admission, enhanced as it was by the courteous guidance and intelligent explanations of one of the firm.

My first impression on looking at the rag-sheds was that shoddy-mill and paper-mill might be regarded as convertible terms; and the transformation of vile rags into fair white paper is not less admirable than their conversion into decent broad-cloth. We had passed on the road wagons laden high with bales of rags, and here we saw them turned out in heaps that seemed

made up of scraps of squalor from all parts of the world. The boys who pass them into the dusting machine ought to be paid handsomely. This machine reminded me of the 'devil' which I had seen at Batley. Clouds of filthy dust stream out as the rags are whirled swiftly round. They are then thrown into the sorting-room, where a number of women pick them over, and sort according to weight and texture, as fine and coarse must be kept separate. There were rags of all colours and shades of dirt; pieces of old bed-ticking, of old sacks, old fustian, cotton waste, anything and everything except woollen; even the rough hempen stuff in which the bales were packed is used. After the sorting they are whirled in the washing machine, then boiled, then stewed for twenty-four hours in a large cylinder which rotates slowly night and day. From this the rags, now tender and of a uniform brown colour, are thrown into an oval vat, where, seized by rollers, and streaming round and round, they are reduced in about three hours to a pulpy condition which a pauper might like to see imitated in the parish gruel. Then follows bleaching with chloride of lime, and the mass of pulp becomes compact, clean and snowy in appearance, and is technically described as 'half-stuff,' in which state it may be stored up in quantities ready for further operations.

A prime essential in paper-making is pure water. The water used here, taken from an artesian well sunk two hundred feet down to a solid stratum of chalk and flint, is sparkling to the eye and pleasant to the palate. With this the 'half-stuff' is washed in other vats streaming round and round, until by further tri-

turation it is brought into a finer and softer pulp, having somewhat the appearance of pale blue starch. A bowl-full was dipped out that we might examine it closely, and satisfy ourselves that, as our conductor said, "it was already paper, but mixed with plenty of water," and ready for the final operation in the machine-room.

To many persons this would be the most interesting, as it shows them the liquid pulp entering the machine at one end, and appearing at the other as finished paper. At the upper end stands a circular vat filled with pulp, in which it is continually stirred by a wooden bar turning round and round to prevent subsidence. From this it flows to a trough, and thence spreads itself over an endless web, which is traversed by intercepting bars, forming a series of shallow reservoirs, discharging one into the other, and thereby effecting an equable distribution. On it passes, looking something like sloppy flannel on the fine wire web, which while travelling forwards vibrates rapidly from side to side, and so completes the spreading of the film. On it travels from the vibrating frame, passes under a roller which impresses the lines and water-mark that appear on each sheet of the paper, The Times, TAVERHAM MILLS. Now the film has the appearance of velvet, and advancing to a series of rollers, which are heated by waste steam from the engine, passes under one and over another, while the clouds of steam flying off denote a rapid process of drying. But beyond these cylinders lies the sizing trough, from which, without any pause in its onward motion, the now solid sheet receives a dressing of size; is then taken up by

another series of heated metal rollers; then by flannel rollers; then by a pair of rollers which apply pressure, and the paper-making is complete.

Thus from end to end of the machine extends the long continuous sheet, uniform in thickness and two yards in width. Still travelling on, it obeys the movement of an awkward-looking lever which measures off the length of the sheets; passes under three keen blades that divide it in the middle and cut off the rough edges at one stroke, and the two sheets thus produced descend in a vertical stream, so to speak, to the hands of the women and boys, who lift them off and build up a great pile therewith in the lower corner of the room.

Contrasted with the appearance of the rags in the dusting-room this result appears really wonderful, and the feeling is heightened by witnessing the conversion of wet incoherent pulp into dry solid paper within a length of about sixty feet. As I looked at the ever-growing pile, each sheet a sheet of clean crisp writing paper, I thought of Sir Bulwer Lytton's declaration, that if asked for one of the noblest evidences of our civilization, he would point to *The Times*. Many readers will agree with the clever baronet; but there are many others who now and then would prefer the evidence afforded by the unprinted sheets.

Skilled workmen attend the machine, for the mechanism is not all-sufficient. They regulate the 'feed' of the pulp, so as to maintain the paper uniform in weight and thickness, which the merest touch, as it seems, may disturb. If, for instance, a man drew his rake through one of the shallow pools of pulp during the flow, the

weight of a ream of the paper would be six pounds heavier. A scale stands by in which a sheet representing the ream is tested from time to time; if the sheet be right the ream will be right.

In the packing-room every sheet is carefully inspected, not one being allowed to pass which has a blemish, whether it be a blue stain, a smudge, a drop of grease, or a crushed fly. All these must go back to the vat and comminuting apparatus; to which, in like manner, all the clippings from the machine-room and all the pulp-drippings are returned. Hence, after conversion into half-stuff there is but very little waste of material. After inspection, the sheets are folded into quires and reams, packed in thick heavy brown paper, and transported to the railway at Norwich by the wagons which bring back rags. At the time of our visit the exciseman's stamp on each ream before removal was an imperative requirement, paper not being then, as now, free as calico.

The number of hands employed, one hundred and fifty men and boys, and as many women and girls, the steam-engine of one hundred and eighty horse power, besides a large water-wheel, are suggestive of the prodigious quantity of paper manufactured every week exclusively for *The Times*. It must be reckoned by tons. And when we remember that the world-famous journal is supplied also from two other mills, we see what great appliances and incessant activity are required to send forth morning after morning the news of the world's sayings and doings.

CHAPTER V.

Norwich—Mean Houses and awkward Thoroughfares—Churches and Plains—Commercial and Clerical—Blancheflower—The Castle Hill—The Tanner of Wymondham — St Augustine's Hall — The Hero's Portrait—Library and Art Union—Old Crome—Works of Genius—The Museum—Erpingham Gate—A touch of Shakespeare—Antiquities—Venta Icenorum—St Peter's Mancroft—St John's Maddermarket—St Julian's—Grammar School and Cathedral—Picturesque Architecture—A Modern Abbot—Lying Bishop and Fighting Bishop—A sunlit Tomb—Exemplary Peterborough—The Market-place—Rustic Faces and queer Talk—A specimen of Dialect—Royal Pilgrims—Erasmus and Arthur Young—The King's Visit—Bird's-eye View—Mousehold Heath — Ketts' Camp — Crome's Picture — Weavers and Traders — Factory Mawthers — A Silk Factory — Swifts and Empties — Skein-clearer — Throwing and Weaving—A Gross of Rollers—No admittance to the Pill-box.

With its seventy-five thousand inhabitants, Norwich is said to occupy more ground than any other town of equal population in the kingdom; which you will perhaps believe when you see how large a part of its awkward thoroughfares consists of low mean houses, some still roofed with their ancient thatch. To build houses side by side, instead of one above the other, should be favourable to public health; but the dirt and squalor in some parts of this old city more than neutralize the structural advantage; and the multiplication of low houses imparts a poverty of aspect. It

was for this reason, perhaps, that my first impression of the general mean appearance of Norwich was confirmed by all my subsequent visits.

A city however which contains a cathedral and six-and-thirty churches, besides other remarkable buildings, and still shows some portion of its mediæval black flint wall, which for many generations has been famous for good singing and music, and a resolute will for religious freedom, cannot fail to be interesting. But with what a feeling of bewilderment you plunge into its confusion of narrow, crooked, and hilly streets and lanes; now discovering half-a-dozen churches within a stone's throw of each other; now emerging into one or other of the irregular open spaces, thirteen in number, which the natives call Plains, St Paul's Plain, Theatre Plain, Bank Plain, and so forth, where you pause for a moment after your many ins and outs, and ups and downs, and catch a few perspective effects along the narrow ways. Now you are among weavers and shoemakers; now in a crowd of 'factory mawthers,' to whom succeed dignitaries of the church, and gentlefolk from hall and manor house for miles around, and groups of chubby-cheeked rustics talking in their queer dialect. With Winchester or Lichfield in your mind, Norwich will appear in striking contrast. A cathedral town without drowsiness, and where noisy factories disturb the ecclesiastical quiet, but have not yet produced the distressing ugliness of the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, is a remarkable phenomenon in these days. And there are breweries which still maintain the reputation they enjoyed in the days when the old rhymer sang of a certain Peter—

"He lives amongst us in good cheer,
Grows fat and sleek on Norwich beer."

All this curious jumble is spread over the bottom of a basin so deep that to a traveller approaching it from the north or east the busy city reveals nothing of its presence except the point of the Cathedral spire peeping over the green rim of the table-land.

High on a central mound, overlooking all the rest, stands the Castle,—Blancheflower, as admirers delighted to call it in Roger Bigod's time,—now a prison faced with architecture of Sir John Soane's device. The deep ditch, bestridden still by the ancient one-arched bridge, is now adorned with trees, shrubs, and flower-plots, and the broad walks form an agreeable resort for the citizens. On the lower slopes you see the wooden 'studios' of photographers; rows of book-stalls, and a cattle-market, where, mingling with the drovers and their cudgel-men, you may figure to yourself the uncouth multitude which once encamped on the eastern heights, and led by the Tanner of Wymondham, made a place in history for the Rising in Norfolk.

Many a contrast between past and present does our wandering reveal. St Andrew's Hall, in which musical festivals and corporation feasts are held, was once a church of the Benedictine friars, and is still ecclesiastical in appearance, without and within. Here Charles II. and his queen dined in 1671. Portraits by famous painters, Lawrence, Gainsborough, Opie, hang on the walls; and among them, in the place of honour at the end, Sir William Beechey's portrait of Nelson. Whatever be the merits of the other paintings, this is the one

most gazed at by natives. What to them are civic functionaries and kings and queens, by the side of such a hero? In all her roll of worthies—ancient and honourable as it is—Nelson's is the name which Norfolk especially delights to honour.

Not far from the Hall, a Free Library offers stores of knowledge to readers; and the Norwich Art Union demonstrates by numerous examples that the native artists have eyes to discern the beauty of their county. No one could go away from such a collection of old gray ruins, and leafy nooks, and woodland slopes, and corn-fields that seemed to wave beneath the summer breeze, with an impression that Norfolk was a tame county. And the flat marshy levels had been found rich in another kind of beauty; reedy lakes in a broad bluish green expanse that looked boundless as the ocean; and strange effects of cloud and mist; and windmills and cattle in wet pastures, and here and there the wonderful charm and glow of sunset only to be seen in the flat lands. And besides all this, I had the good fortune to see a room hung with all of 'Old Crome's' pictures that could be collected, from *The Sawyers*, one of his earliest productions, painted for a public-house sign, to his latest and most admirable landscapes.

A word in passing, about a genius, may be permitted. John Crome, son of a journeyman weaver, was born here, in Norwich, in a poor public-house, in 1769. He commenced his working life as errand boy to Dr Rigby, but with small success, owing to his awkwardness and want of order; and while still in his boyhood he apprenticed himself to a house and sign-painter. He shared a garret-lodging with a printer's

apprentice, and the two began to draw and paint in their spare hours; and Crome is said to have been the first to introduce graining in imitation of wood into Norwich. His abilities attracted the attention of a gentleman of the neighbourhood, a lover of art, through whom he became acquainted with Sir William Beechey, who remarks, "Crome, when I first knew him, must have been about twenty years old, and was a very awkward, uninformed country lad, but extremely shrewd in all his remarks upon art, though he wanted words and terms to express his meaning. As often as he came to town, he never failed to call upon me, and to get what information I was able to give him upon the subject of that particular branch of art which he had made his study. He improved so rapidly that he astonished and delighted me." But during this improvement, and owing to his early marriage, Crome was so pinched in circumstances, that he painted sugar ornaments for confectioners, and had at times to clip the material of his brushes from the cat's tail, and to use as canvas pieces of his mother's bed-tick or his own apron. But his courage and endeavour never failed: he applied himself to etching and water colour as well as oil painting, and exhibited remarkable originality, especially in his landscapes. With him "an old tree, a cottage, a heath, a piece of broken ground, was enough to supply materials for a picture." He individualized his objects, seeing them as they really were, and not from a conventional point of view, as is too much the practice of certain modern painters. And so he rose to fame and fortune, founded the Norwich Society of Artists, became their president,

and originated the first provincial exhibition of pictures in England, commencing in 1805, and continuing annually until his death in 1821. In the autumn of that same year one hundred and eleven of his paintings were exhibited, from his first sketch in oil of 1790 down to his last work—a wood scene painted within a month of his decease.

Close by is a Museum abounding in interest to the naturalist; for Norfolk is rich in birds and relics of the primeval time. There, together with many kinds of water-fowl, are ranged huge fossil bones of *Elephas primigenius*, and contemporary antediluvians from the cliffs of Cromer and other parts of the coast.

Thence in a few minutes we may enkindle our antiquarian enthusiasm at sight of the Erpingham Gate, a remarkable specimen of fourteenth-century work, with lofty pointed arch, panelled buttresses, and a statue of its builder in a niche above. The worthy knight favoured the doctrines of Wycliffe, to the high displeasure of the Church, and was sentenced by Bishop Spencer, the fighting bishop, who hated Lollards, to build this gate as a penance. The word Pœna may still be read on some of the scrolls. Though we may not sympathize with the sentence, we cannot withhold admiration from its result, nor respect from the memory of Sir Thomas, who, "a good old commander, and a most kind gentleman," is described by Shakespeare as lending his cloak to Henry V. on the eve of Agincourt; and who, as Froissart tells, had a chief share in winning that famous victory.

Other gates, quaint old doorways, antique gables, curious nooks, decaying court-yards, the Bishop's

bridge, and an old round tower standing by the river where it makes a sudden bend, will reward our stroll in and out of the labyrinth of narrow streets. Some of the ancient masonry is historical:

> "Caister was a city when Norwich was none,
> And Norwich was built of Caister stone:"

so runs the popular distich suggestive of the dilapidation of the camp and fort, *Venta Icenorum*, built by the Romans, about a league to the southward, in days when the valley of the Yare was an arm of the sea.

We might pass some days in an examination of the churches, and find very much to admire. St Peter's Mancroft, which looks down so proudly on the market-place, is, so say ecclesiologists, the finest parish church in the kingdom, except St Mary Redcliffe. In St John's Maddermarket, we have a specimen of a date earlier than the Confessor's reign. St Julian's has a round tower, supposed to be Saxon; but we must not forget that most of our so-called Saxon buildings have been identified with the Norman period.

By a venerable gatehouse we enter the Cathedral Close. On our left is the Grammar School; on our right rows of trees adorn a broad walk and overshadow a statue of Nelson that stands looking towards the school. Before us rises the western front of the Cathedral; and this, if we come with high-wrought expectations of picturesque effect, will disappoint us. But, as we saunter round the building, seeking the best points of view, we discover one that gratifies us at the south-west corner of the cloisters looking diagonally across the court towards the tower. Pausing here we see

that the opposite angle appears to form an arched basement, supporting rows of arcaded recesses and the lights of the transept and aisle, all black with age and smoke, and seeming thereby the more solid. As if borne up by all this, there comes in above a portion of the clerestory, seeming clean and bright by contrast; and brighter still and brighter does the masonry become as it rises higher into the air, attracting our eye up the much ornamented tower to the light pinnacles and tall crocketted spire. Seen when the shadows darken as the sun drops low, this is one of the views that will constrain us to linger until we can carry away the picture thereof in our memory. From another spot, more to the east, the cloisters appear with a very pleasing effect, crowned by a green cornice of living foliage.

We have it on the authority of architects that the original Norman plan of the Cathedral has been but little disturbed, which, as the building extended over a period of one hundred and thirty-three years, is somewhat remarkable. Its peculiarities are striking: great length imparting an appearance of unusual narrowness, and the transepts answering by the boldness of their projection to the prolongation of the nave.

There is another peculiarity: the Bishop of Norwich still retains the title of Abbot, possessed by his predecessors in the days when abbots were a power in the realm. We shall see the ruins of his abbey a few days hence, in our voyage through the marshes. And if we look through the roll of bishops we shall find some whose names have been singled out by history, from the lying bishop and fighting bishop, already

mentioned, to "Jocular Corbet," whose drinking bouts in the wine-cellar with his chaplain are still on record, down to the gentle Stanley, who sleeps, according to his desire, under the floor of the nave, where, when the sun shines, gorgeous tints from the magnificent western window fall on the cold gray pavement.

In each of my visits to Norwich I found myself attracted to the Cathedral. But on some occasions the doors were closed and locked early in the afternoon, and I could not help wishing that all English cathedrals would take pattern by Peterborough, where the doors stand open all day long, if my own experience at sundry times may be trusted, and where access to all parts of the interior, choir and chapel as well as nave, and to the well-kept grounds within which the edifice stands, is freely allowed.

The most cheerful part of the city is the spacious market-place. The old Guildhall standing on one side still wears the aspect of the days when workmen could be pressed, and contrasts with the new fish-market built near it. On the other side we get peeps of the Castle and Cathedral. "They are in this city," says Arthur Young, "curious in building with flint; they cut it in regular squares, and form as neat joints as with the best bricks. The Bridewell is thus built, and so well executed, that it is worth a traveller's notice." On Saturday the whole area may be seen crowded with folk, among whom occur such groups of rustic faces and such strange rustic talk as will surprise you.

"Eh! master Pigg, how rough and proud your hawse's coat look."

"It dew. I dessay he feel badly."

"Hev ye seen Jemmy Dunt this mawnin'?"

"Jemmy Dunt? Naw, I shud n't knaw 'n if I saw 'n."

"Law, Mrs Pank, is that you? How dew yer little baw get on with his schoolin'?"

"Purty well, only the teacher 's tew stingy with 'n."

"What 's coom o' Bill Jickling?"

"Oh, he could n't coom tew day. He 's hevin' his place pull'd about."

To pull about is to repair.

Such a curious dialect might well interest a philologist. Prince Lucien has included it among his collection, and by way of specimen here are a few passages from his version of *The Song of Solomon*, in the Norfolk dialect.

"1. The sŏng o' songs as is Sorlomun's. 2. Lerr 'im kiss me wi' the kisses of his mouth; for yar love is better an' wine. 3. Becaze o' the smell o' yar good intements, yar name is as intements pored out, therefoor da the mawthers love yĕ. 4. Dror mĕ, we 'll run ărter yĕ; the king he ha' browt me into his charmbers: we 'll be glad and rejice in yĕ: we 'll remahmber yar love more 'an wine; the right-up love yĕ."

We may fancy how the market-place looked, surrounded by low thatched houses, in the days when pilgrims and kings and queens passed through on their way to Walsingham. Among the royal personages we find Edward III. and Philippa, Henry VI., Elizabeth, and Charles II. Here fierce fights have been fought: crude struggles for liberty. Here martyrs have been burnt alive, and with lasting results, one of which is

an enduring abhorrence of Papistry among the wisest Englishmen. Hither came the learned Erasmus on one of his peregrinations. Here in a coffee-house took place that interview between Whiston and Clarke when they discussed the Cambridge method of teaching the then little-known Newtonian philosophy, when the former was so much surprised that so young a man as Clarke "should know so much of those sublime discoveries which were then almost a secret to all but to a few particular mathematicians;" and here in a later time Arthur Young was burned in effigy.

William Paston, writing from Sheen in 1473, presents us with a curious glimpse of an intended royal visit in the days of the Roses. Henry VI. was about to set out for Norwich; "and there," so runs the letter, "he will lie on Palm Sunday even, and so tarry there all Easter, and then to Walsingham; wherefore ye had need warn William Gogney and his fellows to purvey them of wine enough, for every man beareth me in hand, that the town shall be drunk dry as York was when the King was there." And all the best-looking gentlewomen were to be assembled, "for my Lorde hathe made grete boste of the fayre and goode gentylwomen of ye con+rey, and so the Kynge seyd he wolde see them sure."

In another particular Norwich appears to have been well provided, for we read in an earlier letter that as much victuals could be bought at Norwich for one penny as at Calais for fifteen-pence, the buyer having the further advantage of a "pye of Wymondham" to boot.

St Peter's Mancroft, as already hinted, occupies an

eminent site. Its tower top, one hundred feet higher, will be a good place for a bird's-eye view of the scene below; and to mount thither will be a variety in our perambulations. The interior of the church justifies the praise of its beauty, and well repays a long examination. Among its relics are specimens of acoustic pottery, and on one of the tombs the name of Sir Thomas Browne reminds us of a philosopher and naturalist whose works are still in repute.

Stepping out at length on the leads, we are at once struck by the depth of the basin in which Norwich is built, and by the steepness and height of the hills which hem it in on the north and east; their green slopes and fringe of trees and windmills contrasting pleasantly with the crowded mass of towers, chimneys, and houses. Eastwards we look upon the brow of 'Mussel,' as the natives call Mousehold Heath—the Hampstead Heath of Norwich—a fine wild recreation-ground for the citizens, and practice-ground for volunteer riflemen.

On that height dwelt Howard, Earl of Surrey, when Queen Elizabeth honoured him with a visit. His name is perpetuated by Mount Surrey. Below the mount is a hollow known as Lollard's Pit, in which some of Wickliffe's disciples were burnt.

There it was that the Ketts encamped their rude army in huts of boughs and turf; there grew the Oak of Reformation, under which the Tanner administered justice, and the multitude listened to the sermons of preachers who, Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, among them, were encouraged to visit the camp. Down that steep slope rushed the sturdy rustics to fight for

the commons and waste lands which they regarded as their own; there they defeated Lord Northampton and his Italian mercenaries, and took, but did not sack, the city. But they in turn were overcome by Dudley, Earl of Warwick, and Robert Kett was hanged in chains on the Castle. William's fate has been already mentioned. Among the pictures in the Kensington Museum is Old Crome's view of Mousehold Heath, which well represents the wild and rugged aspect it bore at the beginning of the present century.

From the days of the great Flemish immigration, St Blaise has numbered many followers in Norfolk. Fugitive weavers settling at Worstead, a village near the north-eastern marshes, originated the name of a familiar article which now figures largely in our national exports. The county historian Blomefield tells us that in the reign of Henry VIII. the yearly sale of Norwich stuffs alone amounted to £200,000, and of stockings to £60,000. In 1770, the amount was estimated by Arthur Young at £1,200,000. What it is at present I have been unable after much inquiry to ascertain. But with large means of trade, and much ecclesiastical wealth to boot, it certainly ought to improve its appearance.

Messrs Grout and Co. favoured me with a sight of their silk factory. On the way thither I passed through throngs of noisy girls, 'factory mawthers,' as they are called in Norwich, whose appearance is very different from that of their class in Lancashire. Here it is more rustic and more various, as if a few hundred of rude, blowzy, and ill-dressed servant-girls had been brought together to learn to spin.

I was first led into a store-room of the raw material, and saw the white silk of China in square bales, and the yellow of Bengal and Italy in oblong flattish bales; the best Italian being then worth fifty shillings a pound. Four or five different sorts, selected without hesitation or mistake by the sensitive fingers of the sorters, go to the making up of one single thread. The skeins into which the great hanks are separated are placed on the 'swifts,' and wound on the 'empties,' or bobbins; and to guard against theft of a material so valuable and easily concealed, every skein is stamped and can be thereby identified. Young girls under twelve years of age attend to this part of the process, and working ten hours a day, earn half a crown a week. They are under the supervision of a woman 'skein-clearer,' who keeps account of the time in which the skein runs off—usually seven hours, and who when a fibre breaks between the swift and the bobbin, has to search for the broken end or make a fresh one. Her pay is from seven to nine shillings a week. From the first set of bobbins the silk is transferred to a smaller set: the 'throwing,' or spinning, follows, after which the thread is ready for weaving, which process is similar to that of weaving calico. The firm have also a factory at Ditchingham near Bungay; and another for finishing at Ponder's End, to which strangers are not admitted.

Besides silk in various stages of preparation I saw machine-shops, and large stacks of birch and alder, and the latter undergoing conversion into rollers by a self-acting lathe attended by one man, who turns off a gross a day for half a crown. The nick in the end is

cut by a thick circular saw. The bobbins are bought in Westmoreland ready turned, for less than the cost of the wood alone in Norfolk.

I had heard of a pill-box factory working somewhere in Norwich, and found it after some trouble on the part of my conductor. I fancied that it would exhibit an application of small ingenuities that might be interesting; but the master flatly refused to admit me, and said there was nothing to be seen. I hope his refusal was not inspired by sight of the detective who sat in our vehicle to point out the way through the intricate suburb.

CHAPTER VI.

The Norfolk Farmer—A Rough Specimen—Music and Mooing—Wages and Crops—Ten Kewm an Acre—Splicing the Forks—St Faith's—Scraps of Ruin—The Abbey Farm—The old Barn—Robert de Cadomo—Horn and Hoof Fair—Horsford Castle—Forest and Chase—Explosive Matrimony—Packing the Trap—Frettenham—Coltishall—The Yacht—Setting Sail—Voyage down the Bure—Norfolk Wherries—Privileged Villagers—Hobbies—Closely packed Voyagers—Peculiar Scenery—Belaugh—A bulky Priest—The Dydler—Scraping the River—Winding back—Acle Bridge—Quick handling—Weybridge Priory—The Norfolk R—Pump-Mills—The Quant—Wroxham Church—Reedy Shores—The Gatway—Wroxham Broad—Anticipatory Yachting—The Staithe—Supper-time—Aspects and Voices of the Night.

If common report may be trusted, the Norfolk farmer is comfortable in pocket, independent in manner, and ready to speak his mind, even though in dispraise of a landlord, or uncomplimentary to Church or State. Yet he acknowledges the clergyman's title, and omitting Mr calls him the Reverend Hillatt, the Reverend Driwel, and so forth. But in rambling about the county examples may be met with whose enlightenment is by no means equal to their hardihood. In a certain river-side parish the leading farmer always paid his men their wages on a Sunday morning out of opposition to the clergyman's endeavour to amend the rustic morals. "Do n't meddle with the plants," he said to the little son of a lady whom he met in a man-

gel-wurzel field, "I wants 'em to grow as thick as yer mawther's yed;" and one day after hearing the same lady play a piece of music on the piano, he broke out with "Yes, Mum, I dessay it 's very fine; but I 'd ruther hear my bullocks make a nize."

I fell in with a favourable specimen of the class during a forenoon stroll, and talked with him, while he turned over the fragrant windrows in his hay-field, about matters agricultural. Labourer's wages he said average ten shillings a-week, a sum which seems out of proportion with what is implied of their masters, and contrasts unfavourably with farm-wages in Yorkshire. But then 'St Fay's' is an 'open parish,' resorted to by rustics from farms and estates at a distance which have no cottages. As for the land 't was but second-rate: seven kewm (coomb) an acre was a fair crop for St Fay's parish; but go down between Yarmouth and Cromer, and you 'd see land that would grow ten kewm. While we talked the heavily laden wagon overtook us, and the men, as if avaricious of the long-denied sunshine, 'pitched' up enormous haycocks at once to the top of the load, stretching their arms to the utmost; and taking advantage of an opportunity, they "wondered whether the genelman 'ud mind splicin' the fork-handles to make 'em a bit longer?" Not in vain did they wonder, for the splice was made.

Having gleaned this first instalment of agricultural information I sauntered away to Horsham St Faith's, a village on a high-road which enjoys the daily sight of stage-coaches. A stranger journeying thitherward would be most likely to find it by inquiring for S'n' Fay's, and when arrived he would discover nothing to

interest him except a few shreds from the olden time. Peeping out from the hedge-bank by the cross-roads appear two or three patches of flint wall marking the site where the Knights Hospitallers built a cell; and a few yards farther, in the garden of the Abbey farm, there are relics which gratify the eye by touches of ancient skill—a fine arched doorway, and here and there under the ivy that covers the walls fragments of mouldings, corbels, and canopied niches, which have a pretty effect as you open the leafy screen to look at them. The farmhouse, with all its modern elegances and comfort, retains certain severe characteristics of the days when the Beauclerk was king; walls four feet thick, a stair in which each step is a solid block of oak, deep arched recesses, and a vaulted cellar. "No fear of the beer going bad, or the milk turning sour down here," says the cheerful matron. Then at one side of the farmyard stands the old barn, another solid relic, where by mounting to the loft you may see a roof of massive oaken timbers which pleases the eye by its proportions and perspective effects. What a pleasure it would be could we restore in the landscape the goodly forest wherein those timbers were felled!

And this is all that remains of the Benedictine Priory and its appurtenances, which was dedicated to St Faith in 1105, by Robert de Cadomo and Sybilla his wife, out of gratitude for their miraculous deliverance from robbers while returning through France from their pilgrimage to Rome. But for this who would care to revive the name of Robert of Caen? and we may dismiss him with the remark that his pedigree presents us with an example of the interweaving of

English history; for one of the daughters therein named married one of the Fitz-Rogers Lords of Warkworth, that lofty ruin overlooking the vale of Coquet, which charmed us a few years ago on our way to the Border; and lower down the roll of names we find De Cressi, of whom came that Lord Audley, who behaved so gallantly at the battle of Poictiers. And it is to a De Cressi that the village owes the origin of its famous 'horn and hoof fair,' which still animates October days in our century. And if we look from the pedigree to ancient records we find the Priory of some repute as a burial-place. "Sir Harry Inglos is passed to God this night," says Margaret Paston in a letter to her husband, "whose soule God assoil; and was carried forth this day at nine of the clock to Saint Faith's, and there shall be buried." And a certain Thomas Felmingham of Hobbeys, little dreaming that abbot, prior, and mass-priest would within a few years afterwards be all driven forth as unworthy, willed to be "buried in the Priory church before the rood, where Jesus mass is kept every Friday."

Half a mile across field and pasture, on the way back to the vicarage, brought me to a low circular mound amid the grassy level, which is all that time has left to us of Horsford Castle. Having an inner hollow and a deep outer ditch, once filled by the moat, the mound forms a ring, round which it is pleasant to walk and look upon the landscape. In Norfolk a low elevation treats you to as wide a range as a hill in other counties. That open green expanse was once Horsford Forest, tenanted by deer, and there Walter of Caen, having dispossessed Edric, the native

owner, laid out a chase and built the Castle. It is curious to read of "fifteen skeps of bees," of which he took possession with other property.

But if we are to loiter thus by every relic which reminds us of oft-told tales in local history, it will be a tedious holiday to some. So, as I have promised to return punctually to an early dinner, I finish my course along the pastures, crossing on the way the little Hor, a brook, whose name appears in that of the neighbouring villages. When near the vicarage I hear repeated gun-firing: the Vicar has joined a rustic couple in the bands of matrimony during my stroll, and the happy party having adjourned to the public-house proclaim their happiness by blowing off gunpowder. I once witnessed a similar noisy bridal demonstration in the Münsterthal.

No sooner was our early dinner over than the 'trap' appeared at the door, and we had the pleasureable excitement of discovering room therein for a small cask of that generous ale, for a water-cask, for sundry hampers, and for a surprising number of things, books and blankets inclusive, all requisite for a week of yachting. By emulous ingenuity space was contrived for passengers as well as provisions: the Vicar took the reins, the Captain got up behind, and away we sped for an eight miles' drive, along a narrow road winding between corn-fields and hay-fields and overhanging trees, where, on whichever side you look, you seldom fail to see one of the square tall church-towers: through Frettenham, a pleasant-looking village, which claims Swithin as its patron Saint, and once belonged to a son of that valiant Roger, whose name will long

be perpetuated by the tower and town of Montgomery; and then across enlivening undulations to Coltishall, an important village on the Bure.

There lay the *Adelaide* off the boat-builder's yard: a few minutes sufficed to convey the freight on board; and when the Vicar saw how handy I was in stowing utensils and provisions into the several lockers, he unanimously appointed me steward, reserving to himself the privilege of holding the tiller whenever the Captain had to run forward to the sails, and of smoking or reading according to inclination. So, having 'stowed away' the appurtenances of my department, I took a mop, and gave a finishing touch to the cleaning of the decks; the Captain meanwhile working with such good will, that ere long the sails were hoisted and we were gliding quietly down the stream.

Having now time to look about, I noticed, moored by the yard, the sailing barges, or 'wherries,' as they are locally called, which are for Norfolk and Suffolk what wagons and carts are for riverless districts. Of from ten to thirty tons burthen, these vessels carry merchandise from Yarmouth up the Waveney, the Bure, the Yare, and Wensum, and up lesser streams, as far as navigation extends: they are sharp at the bow, flattish-bottomed, have what a seaman would describe as 'good lines;' and I have it on the authority of our Captain, who does not speak without knowledge, that they "will sail closer to the wind than any other craft that's going." They are painted white about the nose, that is, on each side of the cutwater, to be the better seen on a dark night, and are rigged with a large black or tan-coloured sail. Black is the prevail-

ing colour, and it was to me a very novel and striking sight to see them moving across the broad flats, through which the river flows, where, in the distance, neither water nor vessel could be discerned.

Coltishall was Crown property in days of yore, enjoying singular privileges, for Henry the Third "granted to all men, women, boys, and girls, born or to be born in his village of Couteshall, that they should be free from all villenage of body and blood, they and their families, in all parts of England, and that they should not be forced to serve any office for any one, unless they liked it." The privileges in our days are a pleasant situation, backed by rising woods, and opportunity to trade and build wherries. For a new wherry of eighteen tons, which had just been launched, the builder told me he should get two hundred and fifty pounds. A walk of a mile or so beyond the village would bring us to Great Hautbois, or Hobbies, in the vernacular, whither pilgrims once resorted to worship at St Theobald's shrine. "I owe a pilgrimage to Canterbury, another to St Tebbald of Hobbies," recites the will of a conscientious dame who died not long before shrines, mass, and monks were abolished. In remoter days, Peter de Alto Bosco, whose name the place still preserves in another form, founded not far from the shrine, an hospital or "God's House," for the lodgment of travellers and poor folk. And on the opposite side of the river stands Horstead, which also attracted pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Pity.

Pleasant are the holidays wherein we can interweave the past with the present. While we have been in-

dulging in reminiscences, the *Adelaide* has sailed onwards before a merry breeze, and the water prattles cheerfully against her bow. She is a graceful little 'dandy-rigged' vessel, of ten tons burthen, and thirty feet in length, dimensions which involve the snuggest of accommodations. Standing upright in the cabin is out of the question; but we can sit comfortably on the cushions that become mattresses after sunset, with the table between us; and if we are careful never to stand up in the stern sheets our skulls will escape many a bruise from the jibing boom. Clearly our life will have a compactness about it for some days to come.

Watching for varieties of Norfolk scenery I soon become aware, as the yacht descends the curving reaches of the river, that the valley presents many a pleasing scene, and combinations of natural beauty. The low banks are fringed by sedge and luxuriant grasses, and adorned by gay flowers, and the broad meadows are bounded by swelling heights, which now receding, now advancing, attract the eye by diversified features of wood and hedge-row, grassy slope, and rounding field, and here and there a homestead or hall flashing the sun-beams from their windows, and here and there a windmill or church-tower. In places a breadth of rusty thatch or a dark red road contrasts with the bright green of a newly-mown meadow or lawn, and a garden or orchard enlivens the acclivity; and you perceive that here as elsewhere England maintains her supremacy for that cultivation and finish which, rare in other countries, are essential to what may be particularly described as pretty scenery.

Belaugh church is conspicuous from afar, standing

on a high bluff which springs so boldly from the river that portions of the church-yard have crumbled away. In the days of the Iconoclastic visitation, a letter was written by one of the destroyers to Mr Sheriff Tofts at Norwich concerning "the scandalous minister at Belagh, and his unpurged mass-house. Master Sherwood," says the writer, naming the offending clerk, "albeit his fasts, is bulky, and was fain to leave his cloak and baldrick at a dwelling below the hill whereon Belagh steeple house standeth, perked like one of the idolatrous high-places of Israel. And this also reeketh foully of superstition." He then tells that "King Edward of pious memory brake down the Virgin Mary with Christ in her arms in the place prelatics call the chancel;" that "the screen hath twelve apostles, their faces rubbed out by a godly trooper from Hobbies;" but "O, Master Tofts, the loft yet standeth. Moreover, the sexton saith this malignant will not use a desk as ordered in time of the man's father."

"D' ye see the dydler yonder?" inquires the Captain, who has made up his mind that it shall not be his fault if I do not notice every object that comes in sight. I looked ahead expecting to see something queer; but saw only a man who appeared to be hoeing the river bottom. He, however, was the dydler. Standing on the bank, with a scoop or dredge fixed to the end of a long pole, he plunges it into the stream as far as he can lean forward with safety, then resting the pole on his shoulder, which is protected by a thick pad as a fulcrum, he drags up the scoop by a bodily effort, and drops the muddy contents upon the bank. Thus by one process the bottom is deepened

and the bank heightened: the mud soon hardens, and produces a crop of thistles, and in time the coarse grass and flowers appear which harmonize the newly-raised bank with the ancient grass and flowers of the meadow. I saw enough on this and other occasions to convince me that dydling must be very laborious work. "Many 's the back-ache I 've had at that sort o' fun, and for four shillin's a-day," said the Captain as we sailed past the dydler, who, judging from the long line of mud at the water's edge, had completed five of the eight rods which, at sixpence a rod, are reckoned as a day's work. To reach the middle of the stream he works from a barge moored to the shore; and he has the assurance that his work will never fail. For the only way to keep a river navigable and in proper condition that flows through a flat country, is by continual scraping and deepening of the bottom. Where a different practice prevails, and the banks are for ever raised in proportion to the increase of mud in the bed, as along the course of the Rhine in Holland and along the Po, the river in time flows upon a mound high above the surrounding country, which it afflicts with disastrous inundations.

It is remarked of rivers in a flat country that they flow where they can, straying widely from a direct course, and the Bure is no exception, for after sailing more than three miles from Belaugh church, during which we pass the confluence of the Hor in the southern extremity of the curve, we come within a quarter of a mile of the same bluff on its eastern side. And all the way the meadows resound with the voices of hay-makers, whom the unusual

sunshine excites to unusual activity; and here and there the slopes are overspread with fields of wheat and barley that produce a waving outline against the clear blue sky. Then Acle bridge comes in sight: in a trice the Captain unships the mizen; mainsail and foresail fall quickly down, and the tall mast, poised by half a ton of lead on its foot, leans gradually sternwards, obedient to a pull, until it lies flat, and we steer through the low narrow arch, and in two minutes are once more making sail. The masts of the river wherries are similarly poised, and it is somewhat surprising to a stranger to see how speedily even one man will pass a bridge, and resume his navigation.

About a mile east of the bridge are a few fragments of what was once Weybridge Priory; with nothing about them however to tempt us ashore. Now the breeze freshens, and the *Adelaide* heeling over dashes through the water and sends a noisy wave of foam to each bank, and the Captain chuckles, and says, "If it 'll only blaw like that to-morrow, so much the better for the water-frolic." In Norfolkian vernacular the *r* is unpardonably defrauded of its rights; and instead of the full rough sound which properly belongs to it, your East Anglian utters it with but a very faint echo of an *r*. Sound the three letters *orr* as *ah*, and your pronunciation of to-morrow will be as good as native anywhere between the Yare and the Wash; so of the *or* in Norwich, and in other words. And should you chance to hear a rustic ask to borrow a wheelbarrow, or a cartload of timber, or offer to carry a ladder on his shoulder, you will have a convincing proof

of the affinity between him and the Cockney who inquires "Have you read *Temple Bah?*"

Every bend brings us nearer to the district where the river passes between the scenes which are perhaps most interesting to a stranger. The meadows no longer close upon the stream; the firm bank disappears and gives place to patches of swamp and belts of reeds; and while windmills for the grinding of grain multiply on the distant heights, each, as its sails whirl round, a picture of industry, pump-mills, also with whirling sails, begin to appear on the bank, and the busy clank-clank of the pumps sounds strangely in a pastoral region, and the little torrents which they pour forth make a cheerful noise as they mingle with the Bure. Were it not for wind and steam in this low country and the great level of the fens, many a mile of English territory now dotted with prosperous farmsteads would be bog or marsh, or sedgy mere, wherein fish, fowl, and creeping things only could take delight.

We have got round some of the bends by what, in so narrow a stream, seems to me a clever course of tacking; but coming at length to a reach where the wind is dead ahead, the Captain says, "We shall have to quant now," and stepping forthwith into the 'plank-way,' he takes up the long pole, and with dextrous thrusts urges the *Adelaide* onwards. That pole is a 'quant' in the speech of wherrymen, to whom the operation of 'quanting' is very familiar; but only in extreme cases, for because of the peculiar build of their wherries they can sail round many a bend where a yacht would drift astern. The term is not confined to

them, for I have seen QUANT among the names over shopkeepers' doors in an East Anglian town.

Now we see Wroxham church high on the southern slope, partially screened by tall elms, which dapple the ground with broad shadows, and allow us but a glimpse of the mausoleum of the Southwell family that stands in the church-yard. Shall we tarry for half an hour and walk up the hill to look at the handsome Norman doorway which still exhibits the variety of mouldings that masons of the olden time loved to fashion; or shall we moralize on the quarrels between monks and nuns for the right of fishery, and the king's warrant declaring both to be trespassers on his own royal rights, as may be read in chronicles of the days when men were afraid of a papal interdict? No, for the present we will not do either; but there is something in the view that reminds us of a memorable passage in English history for Wroxham was one of the numerous estates belonging to Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the time of the Conquest.

More and more is the river-margin occupied by reeds, through which the real bank is undiscoverable. In places where a bay sweeps inwards the whole space is filled by a dense forest of reeds, sedge, and rushes, and a new attraction appears in the tassel-like blossom that crowns the spiry maze, the yellow sedge-flowers, and graceful water-lilies; and anon the meadow-sweet and cuckoo flower, and a fringe of purple thistles, and gay tufts of forget-me-not, and away to the rear slopes all yellow with buttercups. The varying effect, according as land or water prevails, and the reeds grow close or open, is to an unaccustomed spectator

alike novel and pleasing, and a foretaste of the beauty that is to be found even in what is commonly regarded as the very tamest of scenery. A little farther and we are among alders growing in clumps and irregular lines along the shores and on islets; then on the right there is a gleam of water beyond the thick banks of reeds, and tall masts that bear fluttering aloft the scarlet burgee of the Yacht Club, appear above the trees; and here and there gaps occur in the reeds, and we peep through a leafy avenue, where alders grow apparently in the water, to an inner maze of reeds which seems filled with twinkling sunshine, and then, with a touch of the helm, we turn suddenly into the 'Gatway,' an opening about twenty feet wide, and the *Adelaide*, heeling over to the fresh evening breeze, dashes into the expanse of Wroxham Broad, ploughs a foaming track through the water as we steer across, and the Captain throws her up into the wind, casts the anchor overboard, and we take our berth about a furlong from the southern shore.

About a dozen yachts have already arrived in readiness for the morrow's 'water frolic,' which is a term much used by Norfolkians to signify a regatta. Three or four of the graceful vessels are sailing up and down or making a series of short tacks to show how quickly they can go about. The others lie scattered at anchor, with fires lighted on the stern, or in the boat alongside, and preparations for supper are going on. Soon our fire begins to glow, and it falls to me to row down to a farm-house at the foot of the lake for a supply of milk and eggs. The landing-place, a softish spot on the grassy margin, is called a staithe, a term well

known along the Tyne; but here the *th* are sounded as in *breathe*.

Judging from the merry voices and salutations heard far and near in the other yachts, supper-time is a cheerful time with them, as it is on board the *Adelaide*. When all is made snug for the night, the Captain rows us to the head of the Broad, while the twilight deepens, and the red gleam in the west changes to cold gray, and the water looks gray, and heavy clouds darken the sky save where a few shifting gleams foretell the rising moon, and the solemn murmur of the bordering woods contrasts strangely with the somewhat shrill murmur of the reeds. And as we return amid the gloom we see the lights of the squadron shining through the red curtains of the cabin-windows, or quivering in long bright stripes upon the water. An hour later I step forth half undressed for a final peep; the voices are silent; the Captain is snoring in his little den in the forepeak; in the deeper gloom the reeds and woods look mysterious, and the shrill noise of the reeds swells at times almost to a scream, to which the hoarse cry of the loon breaks in now and then as a dismal accompaniment. And all the while as the water lips our planks, there sounds the musical ripple that will lull us presently to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

A Merry Morning—The Broads—The Shores of Wroxham—Anticipations—The coming Sails—Wing and Wing—Rivals and Arrivals—A biggened Vessel—Animated Scene—A leafy Margin—Prowling for Plants—The Barge and Band—Rowing round—Cheerful company—Oberon and Belvedere—Something like Sailing—A Race of Lateeners—Elizabeth and Vampire—Meals, Mirth, and Music—The Dug-out—Pung, Pigg, Pank, and Sculpher—Mawbish Visitors—Up and away—Pulks—Sallows Broad—Hoveton Broad—Many a Kewt—Alder Carrs—Water, Reeds, and Lilies—Pivits and Reed-birds—How to get the Reed Harvest—Horning—In the Cabin—Mannerless Rustics.

Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo! the cheerful note breaks my morning slumber, and through half-opened eyes I perceive a dancing gleam on the cabin ceiling. Nature with music and brightness invites me to awake, and I comply. What a pleasant prospect awaits me! the sun's forehead is just peering above the tree-tops, darting long golden rays across the Broad, and tinging the pale fleecy mists that creep upon the surface, or rise slowly upwards and melt away. There is no mystery now; no croak, and the cuckoo chants as merrily as if it knew the early tokens of a real summer day. So silent is all besides that I hear the calm breathings of our two sleepers: scarcely a leaf flutters, for the breeze still reposes, and in the other yachts not a soul is astir. There is something luxurious in the

influences of the hour, drawing our sympathies with him who sings—

> "The summer is the waking-time—
> The winter-time for sleeping."

The inland waters of Norfolk, owing to local conditions, are very remarkable. Within the level district bounded by the coast-line from Happisburgh to Lowestoft the sluggish rivers in many places still assert their ancient supremacy, and send off branches which, spreading out in some instances to more than a square mile of surface, form the so-called Broads. Some are traversed by the stream; others are separated therefrom by a low swampy bank, or a breadth of reeds or meadow, crossed by one or more feeders or channels of communication. Wroxham, though not the largest, is one of the deepest, and may be sailed over everywhere without any of the risks that beset unwary yachtsmen amid the shallows of Hickling Broad. At a guess, it is about a mile in length, and half as much in width, bounded on the side towards the river by a low bank concealing its narrowness by a dense irregular margin of reeds, on the other by almost unbroken woods, which, fronted by reeds, and rising on a gentle slope, produce pleasing effects of verdure and foliage. Except a reed-thatched boat-house or summer-house no signs of habitation appear beyond the open ground at the foot of the Broad. The Gatway by which vessels enter is of course the *gateway*, as pronounced by wherrymen: there is also a Gatway in the sea, being one of the passages for ships into Yarmouth Roads.

A pigeon would fly in a few minutes from Coltishall

to Wroxham Broad; our voyage yesterday occupied a few hours, and so will it be in our downward course, the many windings of the river will lead us to every quarter of the compass, and multiply the miles by three. Yet, judging from the first day's experience, the voyage will not be wearisome, for let tradition or history once take possession of a soil and it becomes a source of lasting interest and inspiration, be its features what they may. And he who would escape the crowding influences of history and tradition must travel other where than in English land.

Refreshing as sleep are the cool quiet hours of early morn, especially when a little reading, a little noting, and much of watching the advance of day, are followed by the unconventional life that prevails on board a yacht. If unable to swim, you may grasp a rope and take a plunge alongside, or draw buckets of water and have a copious bath in the stern sheets. Roused by the noise I make, the Vicar asks how the morning looks? And the Captain pushing off the hatch, creeps with bedazzled eyes from his lair, looks round, and says, "Well! this will be a proud day for the frolic;" and then, a little ashamed that other yachts have got the start of him, he sends up our burgee to the masthead, where it flutters gaily, for the breeze is waking up. And we are to have a glorious summer day of warmth, brightness, a blue sky adorned with slowly moving silvery clouds, and the gladsome noise that leaves and water make when caressed by the wind of July.

After breakfast we shift our berth, and other vessels do the same, to leave the central water clear for the sail-

ing-matches, and presently the *Adelaide's* bowsprit is made fast to a tree, and we lie in a good position opposite the starting-buoy. More and more lively blows the breeze, and sail after sail appears beyond the reeds and alders of the farther bank ascending or descending the river, all making for the Gatway, and by gay flags and streamers they betray their approach from far. It is a pretty sight to see them emerge as it were from the leafy barrier and enter the Broad: now a wherry of largest size, and tall black sail, crowded with spectators sitting on seats ranged from head to stern; now a wherry with large tan sail; then two or three smaller craft close together, and row boats with two or four oars; then a yacht, and another, and another, and another, some among them as coquettish as if conscious of the admiration they excite. "There comes a lateener," says the Captain, as a light vessel rigged in the style familiar to mariners of the Mediterranean, darts in graceful as a bird, and with her sails set 'wing and wing' takes a flight up the Broad. And still sail after sail, and bright pennons appear beyond the trees, and lively music sounds; and so the preparation goes on until a hundred yachts and wherries, to say nothing of small boats, are congregated on the Broad. "D' ye see that little one?" asks the Captain, "she's the *Cauliflower*, owned by a market-gardener. And that one next to her? She was biggened last year. I knaw her well." And now there are three or four lateeners, and squadrons of yachts skim away on a sudden race, keeping so well together that their white sails may be likened to a moving mass of cloud; and all the while the sun shines brighter, and the breeze freshens, and countless

flashes dart and play on the swiftly rippling water. "If we cu'd only hev a perry wind," says the Captain, "we shu'd see fun." A perry wind is half a gale.

The Broad is all animation, and the shore has pleasant scenes. The colour of the reeds contrasts with that of the trees, and kept in quick motion, it is as if lights and shadows were flitting around the whole green margin. The broad grassy staithe is thronged by people who have come on foot or on wheels, thickest about the booth where cakes and ale are to be had, and a dance by and by. And wherever there is a landing-place, or a patch of firm shore clear of reeds, there rustics and labourers, and farmers, and shopkeepers from Wroxham village, are standing or lounging; all come to see the water-frolic. And there is something in the scenery that heightens the effect: a sense of vastness is derived from the general levelness, and the few far-away glimpses caught through openings in the trees; and there is nothing but leafage to intercept the view of the infinite encircling sky. If I turn my back to the Broad, I see willows and alders, and a green meadow slope inclosed by vigorous woods, and tall trees adorning a pleasant residence, backed by teeming fields and shady lanes, and at the foot of the slope all along the spongy rim by the water's edge fringed by reeds and rushes, the ground is sprinkled by flowers and plants that charm the eye with pretty variety. Prowling about there on my return from an errand to the village, I find the bog-bean displaying its three broad bright leaves, and many a handsome orchis and valerian, and the marsh pennywort glistening soberly here and there amid the rank grass and

scorpion grass, and tall docks with blossoms that rival the flags; and in the ditches and everywhere floating on the shallows there are plants enough to occupy hours of exploration.

The scene is still more animated by the time I return on board. The Committee's barge, an imposing-looking vessel, crowded with company and the band of the Norfolk Volunteer Artillery, anchored near the starting-buoy, attracts every ear by its sonorous music, and presently by the sudden report of a cannon, which rumbles through the woods, and soon after this signal three cutters start to sail round the course.

Our Captain, urged by a revival of his old instinct, has volunteered on board one of the competitors, so as the Vicar thinks this would be a convenient time to row round and spy out friends and acquaintances, I take the oars and pull up the Broad slowly, skirting the long line of yachts and wherries that lie moored to the shore. Some of the yachts display flags enough for a whole fleet, and their decks are thronged with spectators, among whom appear the comely faces of English maidens; and the wherries, with their double rows of seats closely packed, exhibit company of all degrees. Here and there one strikes up music on its own account; another, provided with a temporary bar, is emptying its beer-barrels, and all exhibit active signs of eating and drinking. Here and there an aristocratic party, in a roomy four-oared boat, have withdrawn into a little cove between the reeds, and, apparently, are finding real enjoyment in a floating luncheon. Except a few yachtsmen and wherrymen, there seems to be no one who takes interest in the sailing-match; and,

indeed, none but an experienced eye could pick out the three which are striving to win among the gliding throng.

At times we cleave a bed of water-lilies, and the pure white chalices withdraw for a moment beneath the surface, as if for refilling, and anon reappear to heave and sparkle in the sunbeams for awhile before they pass once more into graceful repose. Or our way is deadened by broad patches of persicaria, floating with tongue-like leaves innumerable: a plant that loves the water, and yet, as botanists tell us, is related to the buck-wheat. We are passing the farthermost buoy, when two of the cutters, having caught the wind that prevails most towards the head of the Broad, come flying along neck and neck, as a jockey would say, now one, now the other drawing a few inches ahead, now heeling over till the water foams upon their decks, now skimming on even keel, as if taking breath for a fresh plunge. *Oberon*, however, gets first to the buoy, and spins round it in a circle so remarkably small, that you might fancy the fairy-king had for a moment turned on a pivot; in a twinkling *Belvedere* makes a similar twirl, and away speed the two vessels, keen as hawks, to the winning-buoy. No prettier sight than that shall we see to-day: "I do n't call it sailin'," says the Captain to me afterwards, "when one runs a qua'ter of a mile away from t' other; but when two or three or five or six hang together, pokin' their noses into one another's stern; and one gets ahead abit, and another gets ahead. That 's what I call sailin'." And so perhaps does the owner of *Oberon*, who wins by a few seconds, and is greeted by an outburst of *Conquer-*

ing Hero from the band as we, though distant, can plainly hear.

Presently the Vicar recognizes a brother vicar, who sits with his family in a capacious four-oared boat, moored to the reeds. What a happy holiday for the boys, to row a few miles up the river in coming, to share in the frolic, and then row home! In the conversation that ensues we receive a significant intimation that a certain vicarage stands on our way to Yarmouth; and a certain curate, whom we presently fall in with, gives us to understand that his dwelling-place can also be brought into our plan.

The next match is sailed by lateeners, four times round the course; but the Broad is now so thickly sprinkled with moving craft, that watching the race is out of the question with most of the spectators. It suffices them to hear by rumour, after *Conquering Hero* and the cannon have again inspired the woodland echoes, that *Elizabeth* has beaten *Vampire*, while amusing themselves after their own manner. And by this time there is amusement enough: the committee have sat down to dinner; the band plays, and plays well, at intervals; here and there a wherry is enlivening its company by sound of fiddle, or a comic singer evokes roars of laughter; and if constant eating and drinking may be taken as evidence, dinner-time lasts all day. Every landing-place or point of view is more crowded than before, for visitors who come from twenty miles around in carts and gigs, now mingle with the gazing rustics and labourers. And many a party treat themselves to a row round the Broad, pausing here and there where most attractions appear along the shore line

of vessels, and it is curious to note the apparent correspondence between boats and voyagers. Now comes a jaunty yachtsman rowing three or four elegant damsels in a clean, light skiff; now a four-oar passes, laden with squires and dames, who find much occasion for nods, and waving of hands, and cheerful How-d'ye-dos, as they eye the onlookers; now a broad, shallow, barge-like thing, crammed with rustic folk, and rowed by two men, of whose calling as watermen we may be doubtful, but not at all doubtful as to their disinclination for hard work. One of these 'dug-outs,' as a Mississippi boatman would call it, rests for awhile under our stern to refresh by taking a drink all round of bottled porter from a tumbler broken down to the capacity of a wine-glass. Broken as it is, however, it passes round till all the thirsty mouths have tasted; and though some leave off sucking oranges, or eating sweet cakes, or cracking nuts, to take their turn, they relish the porter as well as the others. "Whur be ye a rawin?" cries one to a clumsy boatman, who 'bumps' the dug-out. "Daun't ye be too civil," is the answer, to which another of the party retorts, "Whay daun't ye look whur yar rawin; ha' n't ye browt yar eyes wi' ye?" at which the whole company laugh heartily. The boatman is soon beyond earshot, and the party, proud of their triumph, receive with acclamation the proposal to "Dror another cawk." The cork is drawn, and while the broken tumbler again renders critical service, I speculate concerning surnames. Is there a Pung in that closely-packed group, or a Pigg, or Piggin, or a Tabb, or a Pank, or a Sculpher? all of which are proper names in Norfolk.

So the procession goes on round and round the

Broad, everything that will float being turned to use. More dug-outs pass, filled with passengers who are willing to endure any inconvenience for the sake of a row, for they sit on rough slabs which are merely laid across from gunwale to gunwale. "Some o' they fellows 'll go home mawbish," says the Captain, remarking their increasing hilarity. Examples of local dialect abound: "He laugh at ye;" "See how that run out;" "That music sound purty, da n't it?" "That is a right-up good un;" "Now, mawther!" and such-like phrases. Presently a little dug-out passes, lopsided, heavy, coated with green mould, damp, and rotten: the condemned boat of some reed-cutter probably, and in it there sit two old men and two old women, who say nothing, but look on in mute wonderment. The whole scene is so remarkable that Crome, the Norwich painter mentioned in a former chapter, had good reason for wishing to transfer a water-frolic to canvas. On the day of his seizure by the illness which ended his life, he had placed a canvas six feet long on his easel for the Wroxham holiday, and "expressed a full determination to make it the best picture he ever painted."

At length one of the largest wherries unmoors, hoists sail, and starts for home. Others follow the example; and at six in the evening our sail is set, and we are standing across the Broad. The throng by the dancing-booth on the staithe is thicker than ever, and many a boat is still rowing about with late-comers, among whom we see, as we glide into the Gatway, a party of showy giglots, who have come from Norwich, to take part in the fortunes of the day. Gradually we lose sight of fluttering flags, and cease to hear the

music, while falling gently down the quiet reaches of the river. The sun has not hidden his face the whole day, except to peep through fleecy clouds, and now begins to pour golden light across the landscape, and purple shadows appear; and the swallows, wheeling and skimming, flash the radiance from the white feathers beneath their wings. Standing on the cabin-roof, I can see numerous 'pulks,' that is, little broads, or ponds, and signs of reclamation between; now a knoll thickly planted with trees; now a small meadow, and cattle grazing nearly knee deep in grass, where a few years ago the ground was all slob. The curves of the stream multiply: Sallows Broad appears on the right, Hoveton, or Hawfton Broad, as the natives pronounce it, on the left, and for banks we have wider patches of reeds, and islets. Reminded by a chirping note, the Captain says, "There 's many a kewt (coot) in them," meaning the islets, some of which are not larger than an umbrella; "sometimes ye can find six or seven nests on one of the lessest. Ye sh'ud see the eggs. One time I got sevenscore in two hours." The larger islets are known as 'carrs,' and 'alder carrs' to denote those on which the water-side tree grows thickly. The same word prevails farther north: we met with it during our walk through a part of the East Riding, which was formerly in the same condition as the vale of Bure, as may be read in Chaucer:

> "Lordings, there is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,
> A mersh contree ycalled Holdernesse."

To see a long straight reach before us is a surprise, and also to find after nearly an hour's sailing that the

river has brought us within half a mile of Wroxham Broad, and we hear the music and shouting going on apparently with unabated vigour. The view opens down the valley; Horning church is seen in the east, standing on a bold height, dark and square against the sky. It marks our destination, but we must diverge into many a bend before arrival, and through a region of reeds. Wider and wider spreads the spiry vegetation, until it fills the whole expanse between the slopes on each side of the vale, about a mile and a half, and very remarkable is the prospect thereof. The surface is irregular; here and there a broad patch, bedecked with purple plumage, overtops the rest, and displays a colour which contrasts and harmonizes the gray and brown and green and yellow that most prevail. Many a reed-mace could you collect here; or stalks of the bede-sedge, of which the round burs were formerly used for rosaries; while everywhere grows abundance of the common sedge, which was at one time cut in large quantities and dried for lighting fires with in Cambridge and other towns of these eastern counties. Some of the patches grow so densely that they appear black, surrounded perhaps by open water, where the red sunset glimmers, or by a thin sprinkling of reeds, which intersperses the shadows with a pale, vague light. And here and there in small coves, or reed-locked pools, the water is all but hidden by lilies of such luxuriant growth that you might fancy them prepared especially for the delight of sportive elves. How they seem to twinkle through the thin reedy screen; and where an opening reveals a broad bay of water-lilies, your admiration breaks forth in words at

sight of so much accumulated beauty. It would be a pleasure to linger hereabouts for hours. And your ear is entertained as well as your eye, for the sounds that arise from so singular a compromise between land and water are peculiar. Now a deep hoarse roar, now a shrill rustle, now a confused murmur, and "the long ripple washing in the reeds," and the restless notes of birds. "Them 's pivits," says the Captain, as we approach one of the dense masses whence proceeds an incessant chattering, "they come up from the sea, and they never hold their tongues, leastways I never knawed 'em to. And you should hear the reed-birds; they jest do make a noise, all night long." The pivits look cloud-like as they flutter in a swarm above the reed-tops; and the untiring swallows fly round and round in large circles, shrilly screaming, and dipping down from time to time to skim the surface of the pools.

Taught by long experience, the Captain, having a ready listener, tells all he knows of these phenomena. "Ye can wade through the reeds," he says, "whar they graw thickish, awnly ye must wear boots up to yar hips, and look out for holes, or mebbie ye 'll find yarself up to yar neck in water, or deeper, and it 's hard gettin' out again. A man wants to be a bird, to go cleverly through them places. It 's different in winter time: then the leaf falls off and the reeds turn yellow, and about Christmas they 're fit to cut. I 've had a taste o' that work, likewise. This is the way of it: we stands in a boat as flat as a door, and cuts the reeds as deep down as we can with a make, a kind o' short-bladed, long-handled scythe. Then we has to lay

'em straight and tie 'em up into shoofs, and trim off the bottoms; and when the boat 's full, we stacks 'em up on the bank. A good reed-bed pays well, there 's so many used, ye see, for thetchin' and fencin', let alone the sedges and black rush that 's cut green to make horse-collars with." We shall see many a stack of reeds on the bank of rivers and dykes, all bleaching in the sun and wind, before ending our travel in this land of marshes.

The straight reach, known as Dydels, presents us with an example of a river flowing along a mound. Unusual quantities of mud have been taken out here. Then Horning village appears on the left bank; an irregular line of houses, reed-thatched sheds, stacks of faggots, a windmill, and little gardens along the margin of the stream; a rustic-looking village, out of sight of its church, as is not uncommon in Norfolk. Then more winding, and broad meadows on the right, within which a clump of trees marks the locality of Decoy Broad; and at dusk we come to the mooring-place beneath the high church-tower, which has so long been our landmark.

Our cabin fire is soon lighted, for the evening closes gloomy and chilly; the vicar, whom we had met at the water-frolic, comes down and shares our supper, and after that, when the church has lit its pipes, we mingle parish-talk with general topics, while the wind blows in gusts, and frets the stream with an unruly ripple. Norfolk, though so plentifully bestrewn with churches, has the same story to tell of neglect and ignorance as other counties. Even within the past thirty years, the Sunday-morning practice of some

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of the Horning rustics was to sit down within the churchyard-gate, stretch their legs across the path, and attempt to trip up all who passed. Others, who did enter the church, sat with their hats on, or lay full length on the seats or floor of the deep pews, out of ken, as they thought, of the reading-desk; and 'lovyers' made signals to one another during prayers. The vicar's endeavours to enforce decent behaviour within the walls were stubbornly resisted for a time; but two or three of the most flagrant offenders having been turned out in the course of the service, and the path-obstructors disconcerted by sight of a legal functionary, and the churchwardens roused to a sense of their duty, decorous conduct at length became the rule. Since then, a Sunday-school has been established, and at the present time a more orderly parish than Horning is scarcely to be met with.

CHAPTER VIII.

Horning Vicarage—Wide Prospect—The Church—Tropical Torments—Drainage Improvements—The Pumping-Mill—Ranworth Decoy—First Glimpses—What is a Decoy?—Crafty Pipes—The Net—The Screen—Against the Wind—Comfortably banked—Training the Seducers—Suggestive Whistle—The Piper—Decoymen's Devices—Peeping—Enticements—The Piper again—Foolish Fowl—The Alarm—The Purse-Net—Ready for Market—Cunning Pokers—Marplot Heron—Pike and Otter—Sounds of Fear—Precautions—Dutch Ducks—The Ranworth Take—A Strange Bird—Pleasant Study for a Naturalist.

HORNING Vicarage stands on one of the bold elevations which approach the middle of the vale, and slope suddenly down to the brink of the river. The prospect beheld from the front windows attracts the eye by its peculiarity, and imparts that strange pleasure derived from free outlook over a wide range of country. That prospect without, and the sight of happy faces within, to say nothing of friendly conversation, multiplied our enjoyment at the family breakfast-table, to which the vicar, on taking leave over-night, had invited us.

The repast ended, my desire to see as much as possible of the view urged me to the top of the church-tower. What a boundless expanse! The sky is gray, and the horizon somewhat hazy, hence the limit be-

comes imaginary. Now, it is easy to perceive how much this side of England has in common with Holland. Far, far it spreads, flat as a bowling-green, yet not monotonous, for the green of the marshes differs from that of the pastures and meadows, and these again are diversified by patches and long lines of reeds growing in pools and dykes; and here and there a bright yellow field catches the fitful gleams of sunshine; and long brown stripes and dots upon the verdure show where the hay lingers in drying; and farmsteads here and there look pretty, snugly sheltered by trees; and driven by a strong gusty wind, wherries are speeding up or down the river, and swift yachts, returning from Wroxham, are sailing past at the rate of ten miles an hour. Yarmouth would be visible were it not for the haze. Westward, I look across the uplands, and large undulating fields; good signs of tillage, but the signs of population are so few, that, as I told the vicar afterwards, one might fancy him to be a pastor without a flock.

After what we saw yesterday it is not surprising that so many of the Norfolk churches are thatched with reeds. Horning church is no exception, it has no aisles and no relics, save a few ancient carved pew ends, which have not escaped mutilation, but is a good example of that cleanliness which so properly belongs to Christian worship. It shares the same commanding site with the vicarage, whereby those who come to pray may find the view of a vast prospect here suggestive in their hearts of the infinite hereafter.

Then the vicar showed me his improvements, which have converted the slope between his house and the

river from an unwholesome swampy waste into flowery and fruitful gardens, sheltering plantations, and pleasant pastures. When he came first to Horning sleep was impossible during the summer and autumn, unless the beds were protected by musquito curtains. It is surprising to hear of tropical torments in an English county; but gnats breeding by countless myriads in the swamp that then covered the hill-foot, infested the air all through the hot weather. And the pest was the more formidable because of the generally imperfect drainage of the lowlands. Though much diminished by recent improvements, gnats still come forth in clouds in very hot weather, as residents near the river and wherrymen know by painful experience.

The pump-mill is busily working by the side of a cut leading to the Bure, proclaiming its industry by the ceaseless clank which quickens whenever the wind freshens. It seemed a strange unearthly sound when I heard it the night before, during our cosy chat in the cabin. The shaft of the sails carries a crank, which moves a pumping rod up and down, and this works a second rod by means of a horizontal lever. The pumps descend into the catch-water drain that curves along the foot of the slope, and every lift of the rods raises the water and discharges it into the cut in a continuous stream from each shoot. Thus, by keeping the mill going night and day, the grounds are thoroughly drained, even the portion lying below the level of the river. In brisk winds one of the pumps is detached to ease the strain, and in very boisterous weather the mill is stopped to avoid breakage. Many

a pumping-mill was blown down by the Whitsuntide gale of this wet and windy year.

By a few months of pumping the ground became firm; on some portions layers of earth were deposited; a few trees near the water's edge, which loosened the bank by their waving, were cut down; and now the foreground of the vicarage is a sound and fertile slope with garden, orchard, and pasture in happy combination; a pleasing example to the whole parish of what can be accomplished by intelligent industry.

While looking across to Ranworth church-tower, which stands on a hill-slope about a mile and a half distant, and defines clearly to the eye the breadth of the flats on the right bank of the river, my attention was directed to a wood on the margin of a lake, as the site of Ranworth Decoy. Swelling up compactly from the level landscape the wood produces the effect of an island of foliage pleasing to the eye and exciting to curiosity. I had hoped for the satisfaction of my curiosity in this particular, but as the decoy-season corresponds generally with the oyster-season, my visit was deferred until one bright day in October, when accompanied by the vicar of Horning, who knows enough of the matter to qualify a fowler, I walked across the meadows to the watery glades where wings and webfoots are cleverly inveigled into captivity.

"There, that is one of the pipes," said the vicar, pointing to a brown arching network that appeared here and there between the trees, with occasional glimpses of a pale fence of reeds, as we skirted the margin of the wood; but all so confused by the thick foliage that for the moment the pleasantness of the

wood itself seemed to me the chief attraction, and the more so as my conception of a decoy had not included the element of beauty. Presently turning in between the bushes we came upon the scene where, favoured by intelligent explanations and leisurely survey, I experienced that pleasure which we all feel while our hope grows into knowledge.

What is a decoy? is an inquiry which in these days of deep drainage and improving agriculture has fewer examples from which to answer than formerly. When pools were numerous decoys were in proportion, and the traveller in the lowlands of Norfolk and neighbouring counties will hear of marshes, pastures, and meadows distinguished when spoken of by the prefix 'decoy,' wherein remains the trace of an invention which was first introduced in the reign of James the First. I have heard of a decoy as still existing in Berkshire, and of one on the skirts of Charnwood Forest, and there may be others in the inland counties; but proximity to the sea is always desirable. In this latter particular the margin of East Anglia is especially favoured.

However, to attempt an answer. Imagine a pool of any dimensions, from five acres up to fivescore, shaped somewhat like a star-fish; that is, with shallow rays directed towards different points of the compass, and you will have a fair notion of the principal element in a decoy. It is a combination of nature and art; the body or central portion being a natural expanse of water, comprising in the present instance a hundred acres as reedy and oozy, and as much bedecked with water-lilies and the aquatic ranunculus in their

season, as the Norfolk Broads commonly are; while the rays are fashioned by hand. About six yards wide at their mouth and narrowing gradually as they recede with a curve to the right, these rays stretch to a length of seventy-five yards, and terminate in a point. The curve, craftily designed, conceals the farther half of the ray from an observer who looks up the diminishing channel from the pool. At about thirty feet from the mouth a strong iron rod bestrides the water, forming an arch some ten feet in height; similar arches are fixed beyond, each smaller as it falls to the rear, where the last diminishes to less than two feet in height and width, and stands at the very end of the arm. These are covered from one extremity to the other with a cord net, which, being brought down to the ground on each side forms a long cage, as we may call it, presenting a broad open entrance to the pool, and leaving only a narrow sallyport at the unseen end. It is a cage with a floor of shallow water and a roof of meshes. Fowlers call it a 'pipe.' Having mastered these particulars, I was no longer at a loss to comprehend the significance of the vicar's first remark, "There, that is one of the pipes."

The contrivers of the cage further improve their opportunity by building up a screen of reeds about five feet in height on each side of the pipe. The lower the screen the better, as the less the place appears shut in, the less suspicious will be the fowl for which the enticement is prepared. A short decoyman is consequently preferable to a tall one, and the same may be said of a visitor, for on no account must a head appear above the reeds. The screen commences at the

mouth, and extends along the side of the pipe in a series of zigzags about a foot from the water's edge. For example, the first length, about five yards, stands erect as a wall, the reeds so thick and close that it cannot be seen through; at the end farthest from the pool there is a sudden bend at right angles of three feet, where the height of the reeds is less than two feet; then another range of screen of the height of the first, and a similar low angle; then another, and so on towards the narrowest end of the pipe, which is left unscreened. The short angles or breaks—the use of which will presently appear—are not visible to eyes looking up the pipe from the pool: you see the sweep of the grayish yellow screen, the round of the arches, the brown sweep of the net, and all so prettily shut in by trees, that whether you shall call the place a watery glade, or shady alley, or bowery avenue, must be left to fancy.

There are eleven such pipes radiating from this pool, which, by the way, is known indifferently as Ranworth Broad, or Decoy Broad. The reason for providing a number of pipes arises from the fact that wild fowl habitually on taking wing fly against the wind; and that for the successful 'working' of a pipe the wind should blow down it, from the narrow end to the mouth. Hence the more pipes, the greater certainty that one at least will have the prevalent wind. Here in Norfolk the north-east pipe is a favourite, for the "wind of God," to quote Mr Kingsley, brings the fowl in great flocks from over-sea; and it is remarkable that a few birds will suddenly appear on a Broad which had long been tenantless, a day or two before the shift

of wind to that quarter. Moreover, though of hardy habits, wild fowl are fond of shelter, and in windy weather they seek the bank under the trees on the windward side of the pool; and there you may see them wading about in the shallow water, or squatted on the grass enjoying the sunshine. As decoymen say, they are then comfortably 'banked.' Recital of these particulars sets one thinking of a political rhyme of Andrew Marvell's—

> "I'll have a fine pond, with a pretty decoy,
> Where many strange fowl shall feed and enjoy,
> And still in their language quack *Vive le Roy!*"

A popular notion prevails that decoying is a very mysterious operation, carried on either in the dusk or at night; but it involves no more of mystery than fly-fishing, and is practised in broad daylight. The active appliances are decoy-ducks and a little dog, all trained to serve as accomplices, not from love of the sport, but by love of food, or dainty morsels. The decoyman having selected a few tame ducks similar in feather to wild ones, shuts them up in a quiet out-building till they become hungry, and then feeds them. Receiving food from no other hand but his, they at length cease to be shy of him, and recognize his approach, which from the first he is careful to announce by a faint yet clear whistle. They hear his note and are immediately attentive, and he whistles in the same low tone while they feed. After from three to four months' training they are taken to the pipes and turned loose to accustom them to the novel situation, and there they are fed by sprinkling bruised barley on the water. Ere long

they swim out on the pool, and mingle unsuspected with the fowl that may be there assembled; but remembering the musical prelude to food they return to the pipe whenever they hear the gentle whistle. If their training answers expectation, their movements should be natural, for timidity or venturesomeness on their part would alarm the wild fowl and disappoint the seducer. Having led the way into a pipe, they ought also to know the proper moment to retreat.

The dog employed is commonly a mongrel, but the breed matters little, provided the animal be of the proper colour and disposition. If given to barking or to frolic, or to take fright without occasion, or to indulge in disobedience, such a dog will never do for a 'piper;' but if its colour be foxy, or some shade of brown, and its temper lively and obedient, and if, above all, it never hankers after a feast of fowl, it will do for a 'piper.' The training may be carried on indoors, or any place where it can be taught to run along the foot of any temporary barrier and leap through the first opening it comes to. The inducement to take the leap is a small piece of biscuit, or at times a taste of cheese.

These preparations are perhaps complete by the time of the autumnal equinox; the weeds and rank grass are mowed and cleared away from the decoy and from the narrow margin along the edge of the pipe, thereby facilitating noiseless walking, when on some fine day decoying is begun for the season. Under very favourable circumstances the wind will be in the right quarter, and fowl 'banked' in promising numbers, and the time perhaps about noon, and the sunshine pleasantly

warm. The decoyman comes with his assistant, each carrying a piece of lighted turf, the smoke of which as it smoulders away is supposed to neutralize any scent that may be perceived by the fowl and render them distrustful. Should a visitor be present, he also must neutralize himself in the same way, and if qualified to be a member of the six-feet corps, he must make up his mind to stoop. They approach the outermost screen with due precaution, and peep forth upon the pool through a temporary crevice which they make by giving a half twist to the thin slips of wood that are thrust here and there through the reeds. If satisfied with his peep, the decoyman gives the faint whistle; the decoy-ducks swim towards the mouth of the pipe; the wild birds follow—ducks, teal, widgeon, in numbers according to season, at times eagerly, at times with hesitation. In the latter case confidence will be restored by the sight of bruised barley floating on the water blown down the pipe by the wind; and suddenly a little dog is seen running along at the water's edge in the direction leading away from the pool. The decoyman having watched his opportunity has begun to work the piper, the dog has taken his first run along the foot of the first division of the screen, and leaped back through the first break for his morsel of biscuit. The sight of the piper is so attractive, that the fowl hurry on in pursuit: teal especially follow as readily as school-boys after a foot-ball; but it is said of other kinds, that as the season advances they grow suspicious of the trick, and resist the temptation. This phenomenon may be witnessed almost any day in Hyde Park, where if a small dog run and play along the edge of

the Serpentine, the ducks and swans immediately flock together and follow it apparently with great curiosity. But, to continue: the dog suddenly reappears again and again; the fowl swim farther into the pipe, and are presently well up under the net. The decoyman, having fitted a purse-net about the size of a corn sack over the narrow opening at the end of the pipe, signals to the assistant, who showing himself at one of the breaks in the screen in the rear of the ducks, holds up his arms or waves his hat; but makes no noise, as the pool must not be alarmed. His appearance and movements suffice however to frighten the fowl; and to escape the fancied danger they take wing and fly onwards up the pipe in wild confusion, which is increased by the always encroaching narrowness, until coming to what seems an opening of escape they dart through, and find themselves hopeless captives in the purse-net. There they lie huddled together, and the decoyman having pulled the net from the end of the pipe, speedily prepares them for market by wringing their necks.

When, as sometimes happens, sixty ducks, yielding to the allurement, rise at once in terrified flight, with noise and splash and flapping of wings, the spectacle is singularly interesting; and you will no longer wonder that decoying is with some persons a fascinating pastime. The place itself is agreeable, breeze and sunshine exert their influence, and a "contemplative man" if so inclined may work a pipe without an assistant.

In the course of our survey we fell in with Mr Kerrison, owner of the estate in which the decoy is situate, who had been taking a peep at the fowl, and

seemed hopeful as one who draws a promising augury. He enlarged upon the information I had received, with the fulness and authority derived from long experience, and from him I learned something more of decoying. That the decoy-ducks, if they behave properly, ought not to take part in the flurry, but having led their dupes sufficiently far, should turn round and return to the pool, in readiness for another attempt if circumstances continue favourable; that 'pokers,' as the *pochard* species of duck is called, are so remarkably cunning that only on rare occasions is one captured, for no sooner do the others begin their fatal flight, than the 'pokers' suddenly turn and dive, and by swimming under water make their escape from the pipe. Pokers, moreover, will at times prevent the working of a pipe by forming a rank all across, and swimming slowly up to devour the bruised barley, thereby excluding the other fowl that might be taken. Attempts have been made to break up their rank by sunken bait, which diving to seize, they are caught by hidden hooks and held at the bottom; but the alarm inspired by their drowning struggles is as obnoxious to successful decoying as their hungry phalanx. At times a heron, perching in an exposed situation after its manner, takes up its post on the crown of the foremost arch, whence with keen eye it scans the water beneath, and unconsciously spoils the fowler's sport at that particular pipe. For let the wind and other conditions be ever so favourable, not a fowl will enter the pipe over which the piscatory bird seems to sit as sentinel, and quickener of suspicious instincts. The decoyman in such a case must try his luck at another pipe. The heron has

good reason for its perseverance, if, as I have heard, one hundred and twenty bushels of perch have been netted in Ranworth Broad in two days. The pike too, a regular inhabitant of the Broads, and fond of basking in shallow water, will now and then baffle a promising attempt by the splash it makes on turning to swim back to the pool; and should an otter establish his dwelling on the bank, that part of the decoy becomes useless, until the creature is taken or provoked to abscond.

Whatever repairs are needed about the pipes are always done at night, it being, above all things, essential not to alarm the fowl by any unusual noise. To natural noises—rustling of leaves be it ever so loud, the dull hoarse roar of the reeds, or the murmur of water, they pay no attention; but the stroke of a hammer, the rumbling of cart-wheels, or the creaking of a passing wherry-sail, will make them shun a decoy, perhaps, for weeks. Hence strict regulations prevail with regard to sporting, and however plentiful game may be, guns are not fired within a given distance of the decoy. Where, as in the present instance, the estate is large, and in the hands of one proprietor, the regulation can be enforced, and yet leave to the sportsmen a good range among the pheasants, and "the best snipe-shooting in the county."

In former days, when the Dutch and Flemings could not, as now, send the fowl captured on their oozy shores across the narrow seas by steamboats, decoying was much more profitable than at present. Thousands of birds from the fens and marshes of Holland are now sent into the London market during

the season; yet there are times when wild ducks fetch eight shillings a couple at Leadenhall, and then the Norfolk fowler makes a profit. The number taken on the Ranworth Decoy during the season of 1858-59 was "two thousand all but thirty-seven." At times a strange bird appears among the captives, and is respited for a while until naturalists have made up their minds to place it in the Norwich Museum, or, if very rare, is reprieved and kept prisoner. Mr Kerrison showed me one swimming in a nursery-pond, which he had caught six years previously, of a species unknown to the ornithologists of Norfolk. "Even Mr Gurney could n't make it out," he said. It is a male bird with a rich chestnut-coloured breast, and the back of the head and neck of the bright metallic green peculiar to the mallard. Its progeny is now, as fowlers say, "three-quarter bred," and displays all the characteristics of the parent.

As aforementioned, the decoy seemed to me a very pleasant place, and I thought that access thereto at all seasons would be a privilege. Many an enjoyable and instructive hour might there be spent in watching the ways of birds, fish, and creeping things, and the watcher might perchance learn a lesson in humility. Concealed by the reed-screens, you might observe the proceedings of songsters during the nest-building time, and the weeks wherein the young broods grow from naked helplessness to vigorous flight or blithesome warblings. You might see the swift rapidly wheeling and dipping its wing, the peewit hopping along where land and water meet, and the purple-breasted kingfisher seeking its repast with graceful movements under

the shadow of the trees. Then with the approach of autumn come the clanging tribes from moor and fen,

> "Part loosely wing the region, part more wise
> In common, ranged in figure wedge their way,
> Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
> Their airy caravan, high over seas
> Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
> Easing their flight;"

and widgeon and teal, and goose and duck, pochard and tern, diver and waterhen, and many more display themselves before your eyes, and increase your admiration of the infinite beauty and variety of Nature.

CHAPTER IX.

Sailing or Walking—St Benet's Abbey—Canute's Favour—The Gate-house—Brick and Stone made picturesque—Mill and Masonry—The Platform—Water-gate and Chapel—Fish and Fowl—A Favourite Resort—Cicely Plantagenet's Liking—The Abbots' Resources and Pastime—An Invitation to Dinner—Bishop and Abbot—The Farmhouse—A very old Map—Stokesby—In the Church—Thousands of Cattle—Flatness and Repose—Dawn and Vesper—Twenty Towers—Distant Yarmouth—Runham—The Clerk's answer—A last Look—The Voice of the Sea.

When we again set sail the dull morning was brightening towards a sunshiny noon, and we floated, curving hither and thither, now swift, now slow, now tacking from side to side; and when, having found a lounging-place where my head was safe from that tiresome boom, I gazed on the low tame shores, the broad levels, the sky above, and the sky in the depths of the stream, and heard the lively rush and ripple, it seemed to me that sailing comes near to walking in the inspiration of pleasurable emotions.

A few miles of this enjoyment brought us within sight of an unusually large windmill, on the left bank; and presently the Vicar and I, having leaped on shore, tramped across a low plashy meadow, and came to a magnificent architectural relic—the gateway of St Benet's Abbey. It is a memorial of the past, which

opens to the mind's eye a lengthened prospect into early ages. In this low meadow, once known as Cowholm, which had been the site of a religious house from the eighth century, King Canute, in 1020, repairing the mischief of Danish marauders, erected a Benedictine Abbey, which, from the name of the place, became known as St Benet's, at Holme. Then followed the common experience: siege by the Normans and treacherous surrender; then increase of power and wealth, until in the height of prosperity it possessed more lands than could be viewed from the tower, and became one of the stateliest of East Anglian Abbeys.

By a little examination of the ruin you discover it to be a fine specimen of a gatehouse and nothing more: a square edifice of brick and stone, with corner turrets, traversed by a pointed arch, thirty feet in height. He was no novice who designed the ample mouldings which curve so gracefully from each side to the apex, and produced such effects of shadow by sufficient depth of the hollows. The quality of the stone is so good, and its colour still so bright, and it contrasts so well with the brick, that seen on a sunny day, the old gate fascinates the eye, and appears curiously picturesque. Each spandril is occupied by a shield, one of which bears three *fleurs de lis*, the other three leopards, all in relief and in singularly good preservation. Inside you see the remains of clustering columns, and light groins springing therefrom to ramify across the lofty ceiling; and passing through, you find the western front inclosed by the mill, and withal so gloomy, that the heraldic sculptures and architectural effect are hardly discernible.

By a groined stair within one of the turrets you mount to the top of the gate and the platform of the mill, whence great part of the ancient possessions of the Abbey, the thirty acres once inclosed by the walls, and the course of the old causeway that led across the marshes to Horning, can be seen. The spongy meadow immediately beneath is bordered on the north and east by a low bank, which with its few trees and protruding stony fragments still marks the line of the walls. Beyond, adjoining a farmhouse, is a cut leading from the river, where once stood the water-gate to the Abbey, and near it stands the chapel, now used as a barn. The place is one which, looked at from the river only, would scarcely tempt the voyager to land. But though the glory has departed, and wall-flower and beggar's-weed grow on the crumbling brickwork, a lingering sentiment remains which varies, perhaps, according as you admire or not the adaptation of a venerable relic to mechanical uses: helping to support the noisy machinery and swift whirling sails.

To us the site seems objectionable: very damp must the meadows have been, and the marshes very miry, in those days; but fish was plentiful in the rivers, and wild-fowl multiplied exceedingly in the impassable marshes, and on every pool and mere. Yet because of its salubrity the Abbey was a favourite resort of noble personages, who sojourned at times within its walls. We read in the *Paston Letters:* "My Lady of Yorke and all her howsold is here at Sent Benett's and purposed to abide there stille til the kynge come from beyonde the see, and lenger if she like the eyre ther as it is seide." Sir John Fastolf of Caister built the south

aisle of the church, and was buried therein by the side of Dame Milicent, his wife.

The abbots had besides a residence at Ludham, whither they could betake themselves, on occasion, for change of soil and air. What comfortable fasts the monks must have had where fish was always to be had for the catching; and what feasts of birds in their season! In those days they could eat of the bustard, and savoury fowl of other kinds, which are now not to be found within the county, agriculture having taken possession of their haunts. The buzzard, too, has disappeared, the kite, the marsh-harrier, and other birds, which then made excellent diversion whenever it pleased the Lord Abbot to entertain his guests with the sport of falconry.

Among the *Letters* above quoted we find one to John Paston, from John Martin, who was Abbot in 1454-5. "Wurchepefull Sire and right well belovyd," he writes, "bie with me at dyner on Seynt benett day . . . that I may comoun with yow of divers maters." The title of Abbot is not yet extinct; for when Henry the Eighth took possession of twenty-three manors, seventy-three livings, ten palaces, the first-fruits, and all the knights' fees belonging to the See of Norwich, he gave in exchange the revenues of this Abbey. Thereby the Church lost largely in worldly possessions, but kept a title, and the prelate of the diocese sits in the House of Lords as Bishop of Norwich and Abbot of St Benet's at Holme.

I walked down to the farmhouse, and asked permission to look at a very old map which I had heard was there to be seen hanging on the kitchen-wall.

"You may look at it, and welcome," answered the damsel, who was sweeping the brick floor; "it's a thousand years old;" and she pointed to a small panel, which, with eager curiosity, I immediately took down from the nail. Years and smoke had darkened the surface; but seeing that the lines and characters were engraved on paper, I inquired of the mistress, who then came in, how she knew the map to be so ancient. "Ye'll find it in one corner," she said, "if ye've good eyes. It come out of a book that a man bought in Yarmouth market-place, and give to my master."

After that explanation one needed not to be a conjuror to discover that the map is one of those published by Ives in 1744, representing the estuary of the Yare, the site of Garianonunum, and parts of Suffolk and Norfolk with the rivers, as they appeared in the year 1000, and St Benet's Abbey with a tower and spire. It is, we are told, a copy of an old map, which was kept in the corporation 'hutch' at Yarmouth, and was itself a copy of a still older map described as having been in a perishing condition in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The mistress was unwilling to have her belief in the antiquity of the map disturbed, and said, as I hung it once more on the wall, "Everybody as look at it, say there's a thousand marked on it."

We sailed a few miles farther to Stokesby, a small river-side village, contenting ourselves with a short voyage and long evening ramble. Our visit to the church reminds us that one of the divers matters on which Abbot Martin wished to commune with John Paston was, who should be parson of Stokesby. The

edifice bears witness to modern zeal, for the old high-fenced pews, "sleeping-boxes," as some call them, are abolished. There are some good brasses in the chancel; one near the altar bears date 1506; and here, in the leger stones, ranged side by side on the floor, you may see specimens of those large slabs of hard dark blue stone with escutcheons carved in relief, which are found in many a church in Norfolk. And if while standing here you look towards the west, the effect of the narrow lancet light through the gloom within the lofty tower arch will strike you as singularly pleasing and appropriate.

To observe the landscape from a fresh point of view we ascended the tower. Flatness prevails more than in our former prospects, and the whole region between us and the sea is one great level of pastures and hay-fields. Thousands of cattle, as one might guess, are grazing, all brightened into distinctness by the evening sun, and here and there are farmsteads so prettily embosomed in trees, diversifying the shades of green, that while your eye roves over the scene, your thought will perhaps rove among Scriptural descriptions of lands of plenty and fatness, as most appropriate to the occasion. The emotions inspired by such a scene, though devoid of the excitement born of mountain prospects, are yet fraught with much that is pleasurable. The desire to see far enough is satisfied; to a wayfarer the sense of loneliness in a vast solitude may be as complete as on wilds that touch the perpetual snow; and if there be a charm in the element of repose and quiet strength it is to be found on the wide-spread plain. And if the beholder complain that the picture wants a background,

let him remember that where no envious hills intercept the ray, the tremulous beams of dawn play at once on all the flat expanse, that the morning radiance twinkles at once, even to the farthest rood, on every pool and every casement, while sunset floods the far-stretching levels with a breadth of splendour and harmony of effect unknown in mountain lands; so wondrous indeed, that he who watches their slow decline may fancy that dark-eyed Night is delaying her noiseless advance.

Here and there the sails of a yacht or a wherry seem as if gliding on the grass, shining alternately whiter and redder, as they reflect the sunlight, and making us aware of the widely divergent course of the river. Look round the horizon: twenty church towers catch your eye, always the same square dark form against the sky. In the north-east the outline is rough and ragged: there rise the sand-hills, whose outward base is washed by the sea, bearing on one of the highest the tall white tower of Winterton lighthouse. And where these rough hills sink down to the dead level appear the broken line of roofs, the tall chimneys, the Nelson column, the spire and turrets of St Nicholas; in short, the distant prospect of Yarmouth.

During our stroll we came to Runham, where, after we had viewed the ecclesiastical restoration, I asked the clerk how many of the four hundred parishioners were church-goers. "About sixty," was his answer.

"And is this a moral parish?"

I could scarcely keep from laughter, so curiously knowing was the look which he gave me, as he said, "Well, 't ain't no better than it should be."

I was again taking a last look at the night, con-

templating for a few minutes the starry sky, the pale gleam of the river, and the "glooming flats," when the Captain, who had taken off his shoes, crept softly towards me, and said in a low tone, "D'ye hear that roar?" I listened, and was presently aware of a solemn throbbing sound, that seemed, as it were, the echo of continuous thunder. "That's the sea," whispered the Captain. Yes, it was the voice of the great sea, borne to our ears across seven miles of level pastures by the easterly wind. There was no room for trivial thoughts after listening to that voice, and looking up at the stars.

CHAPTER X.

Reluctant Bure—The Scoop-wheel—The Swims—There ye go—Dutch-like Landscape—Nearing the Town—Aspects of Yarmouth—Trucks and Rows—The Market-place—Monstrous Mushrooms—Literature and Loquacity—Merchandise of Rushes—Stalls and Boxes—Doings and Sayings—Flat Ducks—Thin Cheeses—Bacon and Bloaters—Fishermen's Hospital—Church Plain—Exploring the Wall—The old Tower—Flint and Brick—Ramp Row Goose—St Nicholas—The Prior's Tomb—Sarah Martin—Famous Organ—The Priory—The Wall again—Discoveries—Herring-smokeries—Backdoor ways—Wall's-end—The Look-out—The glimmering Sea.

One might fancy the Bure very reluctant to enter the sea, so many windings does it make below Stokesby; and it is somewhat puzzling to identify your position where the objects on shore appear to be continually changing place. More than once did we appear to be running straight for Yarmouth, when a sudden bend would take us away seemingly a mile or more in the opposite direction. As we descend the signs multiply of the struggle between land and water, and instead of pumps worked by wind we see here and there a small engine-house with stumpy chimney, and a scoop-wheel driven by steam discharging a rapid stream from the drains. Let that busy clank and splash and rumbling plunge cease to be heard for awhile, and water would soon assert its supremacy in

these lower levels. Runham Swim and Mautby Swim, places where cattle swim across for want of bridges, are left behind; wherries become more numerous, and "There ye go!" is the frequently-recurring salutation as they pass each other. Our Captain, recognizing many an old acquaintance, has a cheerful "There ye go" ready on his tongue. Another mile and the banks are protected by a slope of large flints, on which the tide has left traces, and there is a firm continuous path on each side. At last we do get near the town; and the landscape becomes more and more like a Dutch landscape; there are houses with quaint gables and quaint dormer windows, and long lines of trees, and masts of ships rising among roofs and between gaps in the trees and buildings. Some of those masts belong to vessels at anchor in the sea, and while looking at them your eye is attracted by the sand-hills glistening in places against the sun, and the high-perched look-out, a sort of crow's nest, at Caister. Then we pass a noisome place where wherries take in 'keel-muck,' as the Captain calls it, and geese fatten on the floating garbage. "The more muck the more money," is an East Anglian proverb. Then gardens and orchards, and boats, and punts, and more wherries, and an ancient round tower with conical roof on the left bank, then under the bridge, past Vauxhall Gardens, the Wherrymen's Mission Church, the Watermen's new chapel, and we make fast to a wharf where the Bure flows into Breyden Water.

The wind blew merrily, so it was still early in the forenoon when we arrived. We stepped presently on shore, and while the Vicar went to call on his ac-

quaintances down by the Britannia Pier, I went to look at the gathering in the market-place. I soon discovered that Yarmouth is a very interesting town, combining many Dutch characteristics with those peculiar to itself. Trucks, which a strong navvy would regard as a good-sized wheel-barrow, are here dragged about by horses; and perhaps on noticing that at every few yards you pass an alley, you will infer some relation between the narrow vehicles and the narrow passages. Some one has found a resemblance between Yarmouth and Genoa; and one of our popular authors remarking the many alleys has described the town as the Norfolk Gridiron. These numerous alleys, which traverse the town from one end to the other, are the Rows to this town on the Yare, as Rows of another style are to the venerable city on the Dee. Many of them are so narrow, that you can easily touch both sides at once by stretching out your hands while walking through; and it surprises a stranger not a little to be told that these were the only communications between the principal thoroughfares of the town, and for a long time after Regent Street was opened it was always spoken of as 'the street.'

What with the unusually large area, the great gathering of rustic folk and town-folk, their words and ways, and peculiar appliances, the market-place presents a spectacle full of interest. The long rows of stalls stretch farther than you can see, and you may pass from the display of fish, flesh, and fowl, at one end, through peas and potatoes, mushrooms large as a dinner-plate, cakes and strawberries, to baskets, bedsteads, boxes, shoes, frippery, old iron and new hard-

ware, old chairs, tables, and second-hand books. Here sits a busy knife-grinder whirling off a hissing stream of sparks amid an admiring group. There the dealer in literature disperses old volumes to rural shelves, and by a notice—*Libraries bought*—proves himself ready to buy as well as to sell. Yonder stands Cheap Jack within a large circle of crockery ware, vociferating after his manner; now and then smashing a slow lot on the stones to encourage buyers; and offering a cup and saucer for a penny with the suggestion, "You had better buy 'em at once; buy now; you 'll be sorry if you don't, because they 'll be two a penny after twelve o'clock."

In another place we see what becomes of some of the rushes: here are hassocks, cushions, matting, and horse-collars, all made of rushes. The side of the collar which will bear upon the shoulder is made soft to prevent chafing, and is sewn to the other portion by a tough black rush. These collars are very light and very cheap, ranging in price from ninepence to eighteenpence.

Some of the stalls are roofed, but most are uncovered, and by each there stands what may be described as a small sentry-box, in which the women can sit sheltered from sun and rain, while selling their poultry, butter, or vegetables, or leave therein shawls or cloaks while they go shopping. Each box has the occupant's name or initials painted across the top; and when you see some women standing, some leaning forward as if eager for customers, some leaning back at their ease, here and there two squeezed into the narrow hutch holding a quiet gossip, or a chubby-faced little girl left in charge

of a heap of red and gray shawls, you will begin to appreciate the phenómena of Yarmouth market-place.

And yet more when you note the moving throng: here are matrons and maidens from all parts of the town, some followed by a servant girl carrying a big basket, catering delicately for the Sunday's dinner, themselves bearing away the choicest of the fruits or flowers, and all the while strangely intermingled with the crowd of less delicate purchasers, who, as Sam Slick would say, "have to put up with corn-bread and common fixins." Here and there sailors straggle along, some from the *Mutine* lying in the river, wearing the uniform of the French navy; or groups of fishermen, clad in big boots, purple jerseys and sou'-westers, shoulder their way through the crowd. "He laugh at ye," says one rustic to another who has been pushed aside by a blue-jacket. "He say his ducks shan't go under tew and six," cries a seller of fowl with a derisive gesture towards his rival. There seems to be a fashion in ducks, for they are all very flat and very broad, as if from a heavy squeeze. And there is a large supply of thin cheeses, white and curd-like, very mild in flavour, only four-pence half-penny a pound, made, as a woman told me, of "night's and mornin's milk:" and on the same stalls, as if for contrast, cheese of a dark red colour is displayed. Other stalls are burdened with thick pallid bacon showing scarcely a sign of lean, and that Norfolk has yet to learn the art of smoking its flitches. Bloaters are plentiful, and thick fat sausages, and bunches of flowers, while heaps of bright-coloured glittering lollipops are a wonder and a temptation to childhood.

Look at the faces. How numerous are the high cheek-bones, and angular forms, and brown or olive complexion. Others are round and chubby, and red as a cherry; and most of the young women and girls are plump, with somewhat of a matronly expression. And how the local dialect prevails!—"He speak tew fast," says a woman dissatisfied with the butcher's price for mutton: "He never bring good taters," says another: "Shay 's a gooin' to trate mĕ, I ha' but now fell in with a," cries a rustic who has met his sweetheart. "It 's coom in good auda" (order), remarks a fisherman to his mate while turning out a basket-full of glossy mackerel, to which the other, foreboding a slack sale, replies, "It 'll hev tew goo awahy" (away). It may be that on hearing English thus spoken you will conclude Yarmouth to be a good place for the study of provincialisms.

If we turn from the people to look at the place, we see on the west side tall houses and handsome shops, with numerous bay-windows above, and among them an old-fashioned oriel; a long line, broken only by the narrow entrances of the Rows. The eastern side makes less show, and allows grass to grow between its paving-stones. Here stands the fish-market, a well-built structure, displaying on the shields that adorn its balustrade three of those curious beasts, half lion and half fish, which can only be described by a heraldic zoologist. A little farther and there is the Fishermen's Hospital, a low quadrangular building with its curious gables and dormers terminating in finials, showing us what the builder of 1702 regarded as an appropriate style. To have lived threescore years is

one of the conditions for residence; hence on looking round the court you see none but aged folk, one of whom may if he will sit under his vine, and another under his cluster of houseleek. A ship amidst waves carved in relief is placed above an inner doorway; a statue of Charity supported by a benefaction-box stands in the middle of the court, and among the regulations written conspicuously on the wall, appears "The gate shall be locked exactly at 9 of the clock every night." A little farther and we are on Church Plain, where four rows of lime-trees form pleasant avenues to the grand old church of St Nicholas, which closes the view at the northern end.

The Vicar went home by an afternoon train to prepare for the morrow's pastoral duties, and having seen him comfortably off, I started with the Captain, who said he "knew every inch of Ya'mouth," to explore the old town wall. We began with the North Tower, the old conical-roofed tower that stands with picturesque effect close by the Bure, and reminds the traveller of little Norman strongholds, and of places represented in old engravings and pictures. It is some twenty-five feet in diameter, strongly built of flint, which at the upper story gives place to thin red brick. By peeping over a fence I saw the remains of a solid buttress that had once strengthened the basement, and a portion of the wall running straight to the eastward, similar in construction, flint below, brick above, and presenting an even outer face. But pass along Ramp Row and you see how the wall is supported within by arched recesses, seven feet in depth, a firm base for the superstructure. The poor folk who inhabit the mean lean-

to tenements which are here built against the wall, use the recesses as pantries or bed-rooms. This row, which doubtless takes its name from rampart, will not inspire you with an encouraging notion of Yarmouth; and from the fact that a herring is popularly spoken of as a "Ramp-Row goose," you will be able to sympathize with the inhabitants thereof as regards their diet.

Following the line we came to the church-yard, and walked round the church, whose patron saint is held in especial honour by travellers, fishermen, and little boys; the good Saint Klaas, who once a year brings wonderful presents in a wonderful way to good children throughout Holland and in New York. Before 1716 Yarmouth had no other church, and perhaps found it large enough, for it is the largest parish church in the kingdom. The chancel alone contains thirteen hundred sittings, and on the entire floor there is room for a congregation of four thousand, or six thousand with close packing. Tradition tells of a church dedicated to St Benedict, but where it stood is unknown even to local antiquaries, and they are content to pause in their retrospect with Bishop Losinga—so named, as is said, from his oily tongue—who built a church here at the beginning of the twelfth century. Succeeding bishops and priors made additions and alterations; fishermen brought their offerings to help on the work; the bachelors of the town began an aisle in 1338, but were stayed by the plague, and so the work went on until the priests could boast of seventeen chapels as well as the privilege of sanctuary. The chancel is remarkable for its side aisles

and large dimensions, and when you view the interior from the end of the nave you find the beautiful effect of the Early English arches, heightened by amplitude of space. And while pacing slowly hither and thither, you may read passages of history in the varied architecture, Norman, Transitional, Perpendicular, and Decorated,—or note the Prior's tomb, a fine example of a canopy tomb; or it may be your thought will prefer the associations that belong to the window which commemorates Sarah Martin. You will look in vain for brasses, for they were torn up by order of the corporation more than three hundred years ago, and cast into weights for the use of traders, "an inhuman deformidable act," as Weever says, "by which the honourable memory of many virtuous and noble persons deceased is extinguished." And as if this were not mischief enough, the grave-stones in the churchyard were pulled up a few years later, and sent to Newcastle to be shaped into grindstones. No wonder that the early colonists of New England developed into Yankees. During the Puritan supremacy three congregations met at the same time within the church, separated by partitions which destroyed the architectural effect; and it is only by the removal of the partitions within the past twenty years that the whole of the spacious area has been displayed. To complete your survey, the sexton, who is proud of the organ, will advise you to remark the instrument, which "has now two thousand one hundred and thirty-three pipes, and is thought by some judges of music to be almost as good as the great organ at Haarlem."

The Priory, founded by the same bishop of Ieasing

lips, on the eastern side of the church-yard, has been restored, and converted into National Schools. Passing thence we next struck the wall and another tower much dilapidated in a nursery-garden, where weeds and wall-flower growing from the crevices beautify its decay. Then pursuing a southerly course we discovered it farther on peeping above the low houses, and another tower partly disguised by a dwelling-house; then a long range of the yet sound flint-work appears facing the North Denes; then being cut in two by a street we lost it once more, but presently espied it in the rear of a grassy inclosure which was nearly full of anchors; a little farther, and there pleasantly overhung by trees, it formed one side of a rope-walk. And now it was hidden more and more among houses, but we rambled in and out of strange zig-zaggy back ways, trespassing in gardens or back yards, and were always repaid by a glimpse of the unmistakeable old black flint barrier here and there amid the modern erections. In one place a man showed us a patch of the wall behind the manger in his stable. Then we had to cross a district of small gardens, and little pan-tiled cots of one or two rooms, and lock-up sheds doing duty as retail shops, facing the principal thoroughfare, and among the low buildings here and there a tower-like edifice with gabled roof—a smoke-house on a small scale. And by each there lay a pile of the oaken billets which are burnt to smoke the few hundred herrings hung high up within during the season. This petty enterprise seems very courageous carried on as it is within sight of huge factory-like edifices that rear their lofty high-peaked roofs above

the surrounding houses, wherein herrings are smoked by hundreds of thousands. Here too we saw large piles of the fir staves of which herring-barrels are made. Then another maze of alleys and by-ways, which by repetition confirm your notion that the builders of this remarkable town regarded it as indispensable to have an approach of some kind to the back door of a house as well as access to the front. Even in the narrow rows by the market-place you will find side passages yet narrower, which describe two or three angles ere they touch the door with which they communicate.

"Well," said the Captain, as we came near the end of our exploration, and reckoned that we had made out eight of the round towers that once strengthened the wall, "I thought I knawed Ya'mouth every corner; but this hunt after the old wall hev showed me more 'n I ever see before." A few minutes afterwards we came to the site of the ancient South Gate, and mounted to the look-out adjoining the last tower, which stands upon the bank of the Yare, and could picture to our minds the formidable appearance presented by the wall when, with all its fortified gates and towers complete, it stretched in an unbroken line from river to river. From our elevated perch we could see far across the mass of red roofs; across the Denes to the wide expanse of sea; across the Yare with its long crowding line of ships, and into Suffolk, and follow the curving shore down to the steep banks of Gorleston.

A twilight stroll by the sea, while the breakers came thundering in before an easterly wind, brought me in presence of a striking spectacle. More than two

hundred vessels lay at anchor in the Roads, and their lights, far and near, seemed dancing, as it were, upon the waters; and the foaming crests of the waves flashing strangely through the gathering gloom, and the ceaseless rushing, hissing, and roaring made up a scene impressive alike to eye and to ear.

CHAPTER XI.

More aspects of Yarmouth—The Dutch Clock—Preaching and Singing—The Regicide's House—The Nelson Room—The Banquetting-Room—Historical House—Oak Carvings—Paintings—Bradshaw and Cromwell—Mary Ireton—The Congo—Cart-Coaches for Pleasure Trips—Fishing Boats—Sabbath-keepers—Net-lofts and Curing-houses—Thousands of Barrels—Net-menders—Weaver's Beef—Racks, Loves, and Speets—Washing and Speeting—Oak Smoke—Bloaters and Straits'-men—Packing—Birmingham *versus* Yarmouth Bloaters—Bowls, Trunks, Peds, Pots, and Swills—The Denes—The Nelson Column—Yarmouth Roads—Dangerous Coast—Mouth of the Yare—Geological Changes—Evidence from Olden Time—Lodbrog the Dane—A Murder and its Consequences—The Teredo—The Marine Drive—Attractive Resort—Piers and Promenades—Fish Auctions—Picturesque Groups—Landing the Mackerel—The Auctioneer—Washing and Packing—Busy Sunday—A Sermon.

If from this tower by the Yare you walk up the left bank of the river to our starting-point, you will make the circuit of the chief part of the town, and see what it contains of most remarkable. The quay itself, more than a mile in length and of ample width, having some resemblance to the Boomtjes at Rotterdam, interests you by scenes of land traffic and water traffic, lading and unlading, the moving to and fro of vehicles, the double row of elms, the fence of ships on one side, the fence of houses on the other. Among the latter are some that give you further demonstration of the

admirable effect which the old builders knew how to produce by flint walls, by porch and parvise, by oriel, gallery, and balustrade. The edifice known as the Dutch Clock, dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, has religious as well as commercial associations: morning prayer was once celebrated therein under sanction of the corporation; the Dutch and Flemings, who fled to Yarmouth from persecution in their own country, had permission to use it as a chapel; and there it was that Brinsley, the Nonconformist, preached his spirit-stirring sermons after expulsion from St Nicholas. The old clock still marks the hour, and the mariner's compass, three feet in diameter, carved in stone, still stands in front; but the old custom has fallen into disuse which Manship, the local historian, records as existing in his day, when the town waits assembled on the top of the building "every Sunday in the summer season, after evening prayer ended, and did resound forth upon several consorts of musical instruments, most melodious and delightful harmony." Now the Dutch Clock is occupied by receivers of tolls, Haven Commissioners, and a Public Library of ten thousand volumes.

Another relic is masked by the front of the *Star Hotel;* a house that carries your thought back to one of the decisive periods in English history, for from the family to whom it belonged, after the Howards ceased to use it as a residence, came the personage described by some historians as Bradshaw the Regicide. My request for permission to view the interior was politely granted by the landlord, who, leading the way upstairs to the 'Nelson Room,' told me I might look at it as

long as I pleased. Those who love antique carved-work, oaken panels, and pilasters, styles formed of a half-length female figure supported by an animal's head, arched fillets and diaper work, and quaint devices wrought in wood, will know how to appreciate such a permission. The ceiling has a broad scroll border and panels finished with pendents. Nelson once dined in the room: his portrait, painted by Keymer, a Quaker, who was an enthusiastic admirer of the famous admiral, hangs at the end. The firm expression of the mouth is admirable. The banquetting-room on the lower floor has been converted into a bar and kitchen, where, though gloomy, you can still see the handsome ceiling, on which water-lilies appear in graceful convolutions, and large pendents hang at the intersections. Two of the old windows remain, and from the carving yet visible on the mullions you will perhaps be able to complete your notion as to the former elaborately ornamental appearance of the mansion.

To another historical house, which stands upon the quay, I obtained access by a kind introduction. Occupied by Mr C. J. Palmer, a well-known antiquary and author, it receives all the care which so interesting a memorial of the Past deserves; and the visitor's gratification is enhanced by the sight of good paintings and curiosities of art in addition to the structural features. The drawing-room is a singularly beautiful specimen of the genius and handiwork available three hundred years ago. The rich warm colour of the walls tells with good effect on the complexion of ladies during an evening party, investing beauty with brighter charms. A former resident, who disliked brown, painted all the

wood-work blue and white; but under Mr Palmer's care the mask has been scraped off, and the oak now appears in native excellence. The date 1596 is figured in the carving on the chimney-piece.

To mention a few names will perhaps best denote the pictures. Cuyp, Wouvermans, Swaneveldt, Zucchero, Tintoretto, Lely, and Gainsborough, are present with their usual characteristics. The Tintoretto is a curious painting, *The Embarkation of Saint Ursula*, representing the eleven thousand Cornish virgins walking in long procession, followed by the Saint and her attendants, to the ships. *Rural Festivities*, a large picture, showing seventy-eight figures of men, women, and children, is one of D. Teniers' works, which you will return to again and again while opportunity lasts. It was, as Mr Palmer says, "brought from Holland about thirty-four years since, rolled up and in a dirty condition. The red flag projected from one of the inn windows was then painted over and made a 'tricolour,' probably to protect the painting from injury during the French Revolution;" or the French occupation of the Low Countries. Bradshaw figures among the portraits; and Oliver Cromwell looks forth from a canvas with such an expression of power and purpose as holds you gazing a long while, and you will perhaps say to yourself—So he must have appeared about the time of Marston Moor. Another portrait of the great leader is worth a passing notice from having once belonged to Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, who exchanged it for a likeness of Evelyn, inasmuch as "the effigy of the Diarist was more in keeping with his views."

These and some other portraits seem appropriate in a house which once belonged to John Carter, who was one of the bailiffs of Yarmouth when the town declared for the Parliament, whom Cromwell often visited, and whose son married Mary Ireton, daughter of the famous General. Moreover, according to tradition, in this house was held the final "consult" as to what should be done with Charles I. "A meeting of the principal officers of the army was held in this chamber," runs the narrative; "they chose to be above-stairs for the privacy of their conference; they strictly commanded that no person should come near the room, except a man appointed to attend; their dinner, which was ordered at four o'clock, was put off from time to time till past eleven at night; they then came down to a very short repast, and immediately all set off post, many for London, and some for the quarters of the army." Among the incidents of later years the friends of Winthrop Mackworth Praed like to remember that he once sat for Yarmouth.

Passing on towards the bridge over the Bure, you come to an opening partly inclosed by shabby old houses, which bears the curious name—Conge, because the *congé*, without which no ship could sail, was there formerly made out. A certain driver whom I questioned concerning the spot, answered,—"It 's called the Conge because the monks used to keep their fish there."

The queer little carts which are continually passing, seem so capable of hard work and nothing but work, that it is not easy to see how they can ever have been used for pleasure. Yet the writer of a *Tour* published

in 1777, says that during the summer and bathing season "a number of these carts, which the people of Yarmouth dignify by the name of coaches, painted red, green, or blue, are let out to company who visit the town, and chuse an excursion to the Fort, upon the Deanes, or into the country. The horses used here are remarkable for trotting at a great rate; but from the uncouth construction of the carriage, they both seem to go thundering and blundering down the narrow rows, which the carts so exactly fit as not to be overturned, and along the streets in a very disagreeable manner. In excursions to the Fort, which is about two miles from the market-place, you are drove over the Deanes nearly all the way, from whence there is a most charming prospect of the sea. For a company to have been at Yarmouth, and not to have rode in one of these carts to the haven's mouth, and the whole length of the quay, is to lose perhaps one of the greatest pleasures this town is able to afford." The traveller who likened Yarmouth to Genoa, saw a resemblance between the trucks and Roman chariots.

Walk down the left bank of the river to the haven's mouth here mentioned, or along the thoroughfares that connect the old town with the beach, and you will note how largely Yarmouth depends on the bounty of the North Sea. The mackerel fishery employs a large number of boats and produces fifty thousand pounds a year. More than two hundred boats catch six or seven score million herrings during the season, worth £200,000. Include the deep sea fishing, and it is estimated that the capital invested in the means and appliances for the capture of fish amounts to half a

million sterling. You will see the boats moored along the edge of the stream, the shore overspread by roods of brown nets, and sprinkled with groups of lounging fishermen, in costume peculiar and picturesque. The Scotch boats are recognizable by their different build, by the marks denoting the port to which they belong; AR—Anstruther; KY—Kirkaldy; and by their lying still on Saturday night instead of hoisting sail and making for the sea, as Yarmouth boats do. Walk this way on Sunday morning, you will not see among the boats that are dropping down the river a single one of those that come from north of Tweed. The Scotchman lies still on the Sabbath and is to be seen drowsily reclining on his heap of nets. Five nights of fishing in the week are enough for him.

The rope-walks, net-lofts, and curing-houses, or 'smoke-houses,' as they are commonly called, occupy no little space in the district above referred to. A smoke-house, as I learned from a visit to one of the largest, comprehends a cooperage, a dyeing floor, and net-lofts, besides the tall structure in which the herrings undergo their change. Two men were busy just within the entrance over an instalment of the twenty-five thousand barrels required every year to satisfy the demand; in another corner are the vats containing brown liquor—a preparation of cutch—from which the gray twine nets are lifted dyed in their warm colour; and mounting to the lofts I saw the way in which women mend the heaps of nets brought in broken and torn from every trip to sea. There is no lack of this work during the season, for every boat carries from sixty to one hundred nets, each net fifteen yards in

length, formed of four breadths or 'lints,' each a yard in width. To preserve the nets in working condition, the oldest lint of the four is taken off and replaced by a new one in the course of each season. The nets are woven at Bridport of twine spun at Yarmouth; and when worn out are sold to the paper-maker.

"We gets a shillin' a net," said one of the women, "let there be one hole or twenty; and sometimes it take me tew days to mend one net; sometimes only half a day; but there 's most o' them as wants most doin' to 'em. It 's plenty o' work for little money."

"And you must live at tithes on weavers' beef," I answered.

Poor net-mender! She had never heard sprats described as 'weavers' beef,' as they are (or were) at Colchester; but she "was always glad to get herrings to eat when cheap and plenty."

Drayton describes Yarmouth as the fourth town of all the land, and says,—

"That hospitable place to the industrious Dutch
Whose skill in making stuffs and workmanship is such
(For refuge hither come) as they our aid deserve,
By labour sore that live, whilst oft the English starve;
On roots and pulse they feed, on beef and mutton spare,
So frugally they live, not gluttons as we are."

He would hardly include net-menders among his gluttons.

Oaken logs smouldering on the floor of the curing-house, sent up their smoke to the herrings which hung in compact rows near the roof. Picture to yourself, reader, a large oblong building some forty or fifty feet high, without a floor between ground and roof, and

divided above into transverse compartments three or four feet in width, by partitions of horizontal rails, which begin at about seven feet from the foot of the walls. These open partitions or racks are called 'loves;' they support the 'speets,' which are sticks or laths, long enough to lie across from one to the other, provided in large numbers, for what purpose will presently appear. Does *love* come from *louvre*, and *speet* from *spit?*

Carts arrive laden with herrings from the boats. The fish are thrown into a bricked recess, sprinkled with salt, and there left for periods varying from twenty-four hours to ten days. The shortest suffices for the herrings taken early in the season intended for quick sale and immediate eating: next the 'Straits'-men,' that is, the herrings exported in thousands of barrels to the Mediterranean; and last the black herrings, which, as our Captain assured me, "taste like ham." In any case, the fish are washed and 'speeted' by gangs of women, who with nimble fingers hang them one by one through gills and mouth upon the speets. These women are known as 'ryvers,' because they rive or rend the gills with their thumbs to make way for the stick; and a gang of eight will speet eight lasts a day, of 13,200 herrings to a last; each earning about three shillings and ninepence. As fast as the speets are filled they are placed, resting by the ends, on the topmost loves by men who climb up the racks, till the upper tier is full; then the next below is filled, and so on from top to bottom, till every compartment is occupied and all the herrings are hung. Then the fires of oaken logs are lighted underneath, and as the fish are placed a little apart from each other, the rising smoke pervades all

alike. Soon the oil begins to drop, and the herrings become yellow, orange, red, or black, according to the duration of the process. Bloaters, the first of the mid-summer herrings, are so named because they hang till they begin to bloat or swell, when they are ready for the breakfast-table. The Straits'-men and others that bear close packing are 'struck,' that is, taken down; and with a dextrous movement the packer dropping the end of the speet into the barrel pushes off the herrings in the order in which they are to lie, radiating from the centre, until the required number of seven hundred and fifty are deposited, and the barrel appears over-full. The fisherman's hundred numbers thirteen dozen. Formerly the packers used to jump on the herrings to force them down; but now each barrel is placed in a press which packs the fish closer, and leaves them ready for the finishing operation of 'heading up.'

The export is no new thing. May we not believe that the provision of fish which Sir John Fastolf was escorting when he routed the French and Scots and gained the Battle of the Herrings, had been caught and packed at Yarmouth?

Before the days of railways the Dutch and Flemings were good customers to the Yarmouth fishermen, and bought all the herrings they were willing to sell. But now they must catch for themselves, for our large inland towns and manufacturing districts offer better prices, and are always ready to consume any quantity of fish. Herrings are sent in prodigious heaps to Birmingham, where, of late years, the preparation of 'Yarmouth bloaters' has been included among the inventions of that ingenious town. But as, to satisfy the demand

for cheapness, common faggots and fir-cuttings are burnt for the smoking, Birmingham bloaters are far inferior to the genuine article.

On seeing the twine spinnery in another part of the town, and the large store-house crammed with nets —one hundred score, each score worth £20—and the heap of buoys made of cork, and 'bowls' made of American oak, and the 'trunks,' 'peds,' 'pots,' and 'swills' used in the packing, I found it easy to believe the statement that the Yarmouth fishermen send one hundred and twenty thousand tons of fish to London in a year.

Continuing our walk down the river-bank we come at length to the Denes, a broad level of soft green turf, roughened in places by patches of loose sand, and sprinkled with wild flowers, self-heal, stonecrop, and sandwort. There stands the Nelson column, a memorial of an admiral of whom Norfolk may well be proud, for he knew how to achieve successful results; which is more than can be said of many of his successors.

The view seen from the top will repay you for mounting two hundred and thirteen steps: on a clear day Norwich is visible, and your eye wanders over leagues of the flat inland country; over the expanse of Breyden Water; along the course of the river, and from the cheerful heights of Gorleston to the Suffolk cliffs stretching away well-nigh to Lowestoft. Then turning your back on the town you look forth upon the broad blue sea, and Yarmouth Roads thronged with vessels— I counted more than two hundred lying at anchor—and fishing-boats making for the mouth of the river; and the red light-ships which mark the gatways; and the

tossing breakers in the distance where the Knoll and Scroby Sand form dangerous shoals; the foamy tumult in those spots contrasting with the comparative calm within the great banks which Nature maintains, protecting the Roads as with a breakwater. Yet, notwithstanding the protection, the coast of Norfolk is as dangerous to the mariner caught in a north-easterly gale, as any part of our eastern shores. In the annals of shipwrecks we read of fifty, one hundred, or two hundred vessels cast away at once between Yarmouth and Cromer. The sea, so to speak, literally swarms with shoals. The depth in the deepest part is not more than six hundred feet. A boatman sailing straight across would land a little to the north of Amsterdam, and cross on the way bank after bank to the Brown Ridge near the Dutch coast, on which the Admiralty surveyors discovered the nodal point of the tides of the North Sea. It was here at Yarmouth that Manby first tested his apparatus for saving the crews of stranded ships.

The course of the river shows a peculiarity observable on other parts of the eastern shore, for it turns suddenly to the south when near the sea, and runs parallel with the beach for perhaps a mile to its outfall; whereby a sort of peninsula is formed, occupied by the town and its outskirts. That long sandy tongue was produced, so geologists tell us, by causes which have long prevailed on these eastern shores, as exemplified at the mouth of the Humber: waste of the land, and set of currents.

But, within the historical period, a broad estuary occupied the site of the breezy Denes on which we are looking down, stretching its arms as far as Caister,

and its main channel as far as Norwich. Ptolemy names it *Garrueno ;* in which is perhaps preserved the Celtic Garu-an—rough water, suggestive of Garonne. Ives' map, mentioned in a former chapter, represents the mouth of Hierus, or Yare, as of enormous width; and an old writer describing the locality, says,—

"Then there were two channelles for Shippes and Fishermen to passe and enter into that arme of the sea for utterance of their fishe and merchandizes, which were conveyed to diverse partes & places, as well in the countye of Norfolke as in the countye of Suffolke, by reason that all the wholle levell of the marshes and fennes, which nowe are betwixte the towne of Yermouthe and the citie of Norwiche, were then all an arme of the sea, enteringe within the lande by the mouthe of Hierus; and this was aboute the yere of our Saviour MXL and longe before." We learn, too, from the same map that the causes which have produced so many shoals on this part of the coast were then in operation, accumulating grain by grain the site of this flourishing town. For a spot marked in the middle of the broad estuary is thus particularly mentioned: "this beinge a sande in the mayne sea at that tyme, is nowe become the seate of a verye stronge Towne beinge very well walled & rampared to the top of the walle & that towne is now called by y^e^ name of the Towne of Great Yermouthe in Norfolke."

To an incident which befell a thousand years ago in that estuary, did old chroniclers ascribe the origin of many disastrous passages of English history, trusting to a more than doubtful tradition. Into that broad tide-way there floated one day a boat destitute of sail

or oars, which had drifted from the shore of Denmark all across the North Sea, with an unwilling passenger—Lodbrog the Dane. The tide carried him to Reedham, then a swampy place overgrown with reeds, as its name still indicates, where he must have met with kind treatment, for we afterwards hear of him as a guest of King Edmund, who was holding his court at Caister. Here he sojourned for a while, enjoying his favourite sport of hawking, till one day Bern, the monarch's falconer, jealous of the favour in which he was held, slew him, and buried the corpse. The murder was discovered, and Bern was cast adrift in the same boat that had borne Lodbrog to England, and strangely enough it recrossed the sea and drifted ashore in Denmark, where the murderer reported that Lodbrog had been slain by Edmund's command. It was to revenge this murder, so runs the tradition, that Sweyn first invaded and ravaged East Anglia.

Within the historical period the river has entered the sea by seven different mouths. The present mouth is protected by timber piers stretching two hundred yards into the sea on one side and four hundred on the other: noteworthy monuments of the resolute perseverance which still maintains after years of effort spent in establishing them. Among causes of decay is the teredo, which eats out the heart of piles by innumerable borings. As naturalists tell us, the same species prevails on the coast of Holland, and this is an enemy against which defence is perhaps impossible in ports that open directly to the sea. Fresh water is fatal to the creature: hence Hull, situate far up the Humber, is safe from its attacks.

From the monument we continue our stroll across the Denes, and come presently to the eastern end of the Marine Drive, a long straight highway, which stretches along the whole seaward front of the town, to the North Denes beyond, and forms one of its principal attractions. On a fine breezy day it is a very agreeable resort; animated by visitors and outlook upon a busy sea and busy shore. The drive from one extremity to the other would hardly fail to interest a stranger, especially a health-seeker, for from the green expanse of the Denes he passes the South Battery, the barracks and Naval Hospital, the Wellington pier, and stylish hotels, and rows of pretentious houses; then the jetties, the tall 'look-outs,' whence the fishing-fleet may be espied returning to port, and cast-away ships on the outlying sands, the windmills, the life-boat station, the Beachmen's Institute and Sailor's Home, bath-houses and public-houses, more hotels, and the flag-staves; and a throng of men and women busy around heaps of fish, and groups of beachmen sauntering up and down by the graceful yawls, in which when the need arrives they put out on the stormy sea with right good-will. He passes the dignified resorts of aristocracy; scenes of recreation; the noisy haunts of trade, and so to the Britannia pier, where the stylish element again prevails, and whence the drive is seen stretching past the Town Battery, and on towards the sand-hills that break the level, and rising higher in the distance, close the view at Caister.

The Old Jetty is the most frequented, probably because of the characteristic proceedings which may be viewed therefrom, through every season. Sunday

is no exception, for I was witness to the way in which the day of rest and reflection becomes suddenly noisy and laborious by reason of fish. Rows of flag-staves, marking the auction stations, stand along the beach, flanked by coils of rope, mounds of nets, heaps of baskets, among which the 'swills' are twin-shaped, and a straggling array of tubs, and not a few horses and carts. And here and there amid the medley are drifts and hummocks of straw, on which girls in brown holland 'jumps,' and women wearing blue aprons, chequered shawls, and gray skirts, and men clad in oil-skin and big boots, are sitting and talking, or lounging and dozing; helping unconsciously to compose picturesque groups and contrasts of animate with inanimate objects. And but a few paces distant the great breakers are mounting and plunging, and rushing up the sandy slope, with that mighty hiss which harmonizes so well with the mightier roar.

After a while the loungers show signs of activity: a few mackerel-boats have returned and are lying-to just outside the breakers, and forthwith the 'ferry-boats,' mounted on an iron skate to prevent their ploughing too deeply into the sand, are got down to the water with many a shout and shove; then the big-booted fellows scrambling in, haul at a rope which is laid from the shore to a sunk anchor, until the boat begins to rise upon the swell. Then they drop the rope, take to the oars, and row out to the fishing-vessels. Meanwhile the tubs are rolled down near to the water's edge; the women look expectant; presently one of the ferry-boats comes riding in on the top of a wave, and in a twinkling, her burden of baskets, well filled with mackerel,

is lifted out and ranged on the beach. A number of the women now stand up looking still more expectant; a throng gathers round the auctioneer, who, holding a red book in one hand and a bell in the other, rings solemnly for full a minute, as if he were about to proclaim a fast, stations himself by the baskets, and announces, "I have here ten hundred and three quarters, and thirty-one shillings a hundred is offered." Quickly a bidder takes six hundred at thirty-two shillings; another, two hundred at the same price; the remainder 'go' at 'thirty-one and six,' and the transaction ends with the sale of six red mullet at fourpence each.

Forthwith the baskets are emptied into the tubs, which have been half filled with water; and now the women make haste to wash and pack the several 'lots.' Another minute, and the mackerel looking beautifully brilliant are lifted from their bath, and packed sixty in a basket, the largest in the uppermost layer. The fishermen reckon six score to the hundred. Straw is then spread over the fish; the lids are tied down; the baskets are lifted into a cart, and hurried away to the railway-station, in order that London, or Birmingham, may have mackerel early on Monday morning.

Meanwhile, another ferry-boat had returned to the shore, and a similar scene was enacting on the opposite side of the jetty. And looking on the busy sight, I fancied that the line of distinction between what the compilers of time-tables perversely describe as "week-days" and Sundays must be very hazy in the minds of all whose vocation is fishy. Not so, however, at

St Nicholas' church, where I heard the preacher in his evening sermon denounce Sunday fish-sales, with the severity of one who spoke from conviction, and argue that his text, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," gave no countenance to such proceedings.

It was an impressive spectacle, while the sonorous harmonies of the Voluntary rolled between the arches and along the lofty roof of the stately church, to see the great multitude of people that streamed slowly from the doors and took their way homewards through the leafy avenues of the Plain.

CHAPTER XII.

A fresh Start—Rifle Practice—Caister—The Sand-hills—The Look-out—Sand and Grass—Fields and Foliage—Two Towers—The Maiden's Tomb—Nets to sell, but no Fish—Caister Castle—A gleaming Avenue—The Tower—Picturesque Interior—Sir John Fastolf—The Pastons—Scraps from Letters—Loak, Ligger, and Bane-piece—Mautby—A Curate's Lunch—Walk to Stokesby—The Yacht again—The Thurn—Heigham Bridge—Wretched Cottages—Nice Navigation—Millions of Gnats—Touches of the Picturesque—Martham—Remarkable Prospect—Somerton Broad—Winterton—Oaken Pillars, ugly Pulpit—The Lighthouse Gallery—A Marshy Walk—Old Channels—Horsey Mere—A Transmutation—All Golden—Heigham Sounds—Hickling Broad—Ducks thick as Herrings—Candle Dyke—Midnight Sailing.

THE Vicar found us ready for a start when he came back early in the forenoon of Monday, and we set off at once to walk along the shore to Caister, while the Captain prepared for a sail up the river to Stokesby, there to await our arrival. Soon we were trudging along the shore towards the distant sand-hills, and came upon a company of the Donegal militia who were actively engaged in rifle-practice. I thought that the quick sharp reports would in time become familiar throughout the realm, announcing to many an ear that English courage has become the mightier by acquirement of skill. The Vicar recognized an acquaintance among the party of ladies and gentlemen who had as-

sembled to look on, and we stood to watch the practice. It was very good: bullet after bullet whizzed and screamed through the air, struck sharply on the iron target, and near enough to the centre to make the Captain proud of his company. Among the ladies there was one whom the sight inspired to a trial of her own skill with the weapon; so resting a rifle on a gentleman's shoulder she fired at one of the targets, but hit the other which stood some yards to the left. She tried a second time, and missed both.

We went on, and scrambling presently up the loose sandy bank or cliff found a way across the rough, coarse grass and gorse to Caister. Here the sand rises into hills which send down long loose drifts on their inner slope and encroach in places on the marshes. On one of the highest stands the look-out, a sort of sentry-box perched on beams some sixty feet in height, and to widen our prospect we took leave to ascend. We found a fisherman in possession, watching the fleet of fishing-boats in the offing through his telescope: to me the sails appeared like the upraised wings of large flocks of birds. The terrible gale of Whitsuntide was not yet forgotten, for, as the man said quietly, "some poor fellows belonging to Caister were lost." He opened the small sliding shutters that we might look out on each side of his nest. How fiercely the breeze rushed through when he opened the windward pair! We could see miles of the straight line of coast: Breyden Water and Yarmouth, and the yacht just clear of the town making way up the river. Seen in perspective the sand-hills appear as a shaggy bank, fronted by a rough foreshore, and a white belt of sand which gleams

brightly when the sun shines in rivalry with the leaping foam of the sea.

And many a league of the level country within the hills lay outspread beneath us, much lower apparently than the sea, which rushes up on the outside as if eager to break through and throw back those broad flat meadows into their former swampy condition. The Præpositus Equitum Stablesianorum who maintained the authority of the Romans at the mouth of the Yare, after subjugation of the Iceni, had a watery invader to repel as well as free-booters of the sea, who even then had begun to ply their lawless trade. It was a very different shore in his day.

On the foreshore you can see red-bottomed boats lying in the open patches amid the gorse, and on the inner slope the red roofs and black tarred walls of the village; and it is interesting to note how the ragged waste yields sparely to gardens and hedgerows in the rear of the houses, and how from that point the cultivation increases in breadth and fulness, until at a few furlongs' distance the belts and masses of foliage and chequer-work of fields denote fertility and prosperous tillage. An ancient tower rising from the thick-growing trees marks the site of Caister Castle; and not far from it appears the church-tower, on the top of which a low central ridge appears above the parapet, marking the place of a tomb, wherein, so runs tradition, a maiden was buried. Her lover returning from a long voyage perished by shipwreck on the coast, and the maiden, dying of grief, directed that her corpse should be entombed on the tower-top, under a pyramid raised high enough to serve as a sea-mark. That pyramid

must have been an obtuse spire. What has become of it?

We offered to buy fish on our way through the village; but as usual by the seaside, none was to be had. "Can I sell ye a net?" inquired a brown-faced matron, who sat at her door amid lobster-pots and a heap of fishing-tackle, knotting the meshes with nimble fingers. She could earn fourpence a day at net-making.

About a mile through corn-fields and we came to the ruin of the stately house, now known as Caister Castle, built by Sir John Fastolf, who was a valiant knight in his day, and did good service in the wars in France. He defrayed the cost, as is said, with his portion of the forty thousand crowns of ransom, paid by John Duke of Alençon. The house was three hundred feet square, with a tower at each corner, and was one of the earliest brick houses in the kingdom.

There is a long range of old red-brick wall within a moat screened by tall trees, with the tall round tower, the only one remaining, which we had seen from the look-out, rising at the corner. Opposite the tower, at the bend of the road, grows a noble ash, alluring you to tarry beneath it and look at the striking view which thence appears. The long dim vista of the moat, where sunbeams, and leafy boughs, and brown stems, and the dark red wall intermingle and reflect surprising effects of colour on the calm gleaming surface, seems a mysterious avenue along which one might glide to a more mysterious region beyond. You feel as if you could never tire of gazing thereon, so infinitely various are the effects while the wind plays among the branches.

And how picturesquely the tower fits into the scene with its encircling crest of rounded machicolations and pendents, and pigeons flying about the summit. Truly the builder had an eye for beauty, and knew how to produce admirable effects with brickwork.

The whole place is inclosed by the moat, and the gate is kept locked; but we had been furnished with a password by a parishioner of St Faith's, and so were entrusted with the key. The gateway forms an obtuse ogee arch: you enter and discover that the long range of wall is a mere shell, for the interior is a large grassy quadrangle, with fruit-trees along the sunny side, and elder-trees grouping here and there in rounded flowery masses, and an old poultry-coop and mud-walled shed, draped in places by ivy, looking very snug and fruitful. On one side there is no screen, and you can look across to the neighbouring fields; and from near the shed you have, perhaps, the best view of the interior. The tower and turret fill the angle: the gable mark on the wall preserves the outline of the roof of the great hall; the row of windows above the gateway breaks the mass of red with lights and shadows; the tower in which the priest's chamber was situate, near the chapel, retains the old corbels and gurgoyles; so that while your mind is trying to recall scraps of history, there are occupation and enjoyment enough for your eye. Dogs are kennelled at the foot of the tower, and jackdaws inhabit the upper part, and have carried in so large a heap of sticks as to conceal the fragment that remains of the old winding stair. On the ground-floor is a small chamber with groined ceiling and a two-light foliated window; but all above is hollow and

empty, and in looking up you see a circle of blue sky, and the marks of old floors and fireplaces.

Besides this house of Caister, Sir John Fastolf built a mansion at Yarmouth, where he had ships and merchandise of corn and wool. He was a true Norfolk worthy, and used to swear by "Blackberd and Whyteberd" that his household should discharge their duty properly and quietly. He died in 1459, at the ripe age of eighty-two; and Caister fell to the Pastons. William of Worcester, writing to one of the family a few years later, says, "I am right glad that Caister is and shall be at your commandement, and yours in especial, a rich jewel it is at nede for all the country in time of war, and my master Fastolf would rather he had never builded it, than it should be in the governance of any sovereign that will oppress the country."

Of what befell afterwards—how Caister was claimed and besieged by the Duke of Norfolk—how the Pastons' hope of "rehaving" the place was fulfilled, though Edward IV. also disputed their title—how certain pirates, after much taking of prizes and havoc on other parts of the coast, had been so bold as to "come up to the land, and played them on Caister sands, as homely as they were Englishmen"—how loving and lowly messages were sent by the different members of the family to and from Sir John's "pore place of Castre," mingling news of the terrible battles of the Roses, with approval or disapproval of marriage projects, suggestions for education and behaviour, demands for equipments of war, and gowns and slippers, and figs and raisins, and "ij potts off oyle for saladys," and

whether damsel Margaret was "disposyd to be thyke" —all this, and much more illustrative of life and manners in Norfolk nearly five centuries ago, may be read in the *Paston Letters*.

The shortest cross-country route to Stokesby was, as certain hay-makers told us, down a 'loak' to the water-meadows, then by another 'loak' to the 'ligger,' and through a 'bane-piece.' Loak means lane; ligger, or, in native pronunciation, 'ligga,' is the plank across a ditch or drain; and by and by the sweet scent and busy hum of bees in a bean-field assured us that we had not misunderstood the rustics. Then we came to Mautby (Mawby) and saw a church-tower, octagonal below, round above, and roofed with a cone—a Maltese cross over the door within the porch—a north door of admirable effect, and a chancel devoid of altar-rails and higher than the nave.

"Ye are the heartiest kinsman and friend that he knoweth, he would have you at Mawlteby dwelling," was a loving message sent by desire of Sir John Fastolf to one of the Pastons; and John Paston, writing to his brother, says, "My mother would fain have you at Mawtby, she rode thither, out of Norwich on Saturday last past, to purvey your lodging ready against your coming."

The curate of Mautby, whom we had met at the water-frolic, lodges in a farm-house not far from the church, and we now accepted his invitation. Unfortunately for us, he was not at home; but his offer of lunch was in force nevertheless, and the farmer's wife soon placed bread and cheese and ale before us, and while we ate and drank we looked at the pleasant view

through the window, and at the backs of the books on the shelves.

"Time is set out, with head all balde,
Save one odde locke before;
Which locke, if once you do let slippe,
Then look for Time no more."

In the seven miles from Caister to Stokesby we had an agreeable variety of scenery; including Filby Decoy, and Thrigby Hall and Green, and ending with a pretty lane overhung by oaks and hedges thick with honeysuckle. The yacht had arrived, and towards evening we got under way, and sailed till nightfall, and then moored in a belt of rushes above Acle bridge. The night was so cold and gloomy that we had to comfort ourselves with a fire in the cabin.

The Bure makes a remarkable bend at the infall of the Thurn, and forms what is called Junction Broad. The Thurn, up which we now sailed, is a narrow stream, flowing from near the sea with a course indicated by its alias—North river. At Heigham bridge we landed, the Vicar having an errand to the post-office, or rather to the cottage where letters may be left till the mail-cart passes. On our return through the village by a back lane we saw labourers' cottages of which Norfolk should feel ashamed, for they are wretched as Irish cabins.

To sail up a river that seems as if at every furlong it would narrow to a ditch, was a feat that delighted the Captain, and called into play a few nice touches of the wherryman's craft. In a dry summer it would be more difficult from shallow water; besides the torment

of millions of gnats which abound in this region during a drought, annoying as musquitoes. "Many a time," said the Captain, "when here with the wherry, have I had to slip into the fore-peak at night like a weasel, and let fall the hatch suddenly to keep 'em out."

Broader and broader, as we advanced, spread the grassy levels in which the distant clumps and low swelling hills, one crowned by Martham church, appeared like islands rising from a sea. A gleam in the north showed us where to look for Hickling Broad, and beyond the rim of the eastern landscape we saw the topsails of ships and the curling smoke of steamers. And the narrow stream itself was so prettily fringed with flowers, and relieved here and there with old weather-stained and black-thatched sheds, and old gray hand-rails where the liggers crossed the drains, that it gave us the impression of a new region. A Norwich artist would reap there a harvest of picturesque effects. How ample a harvest may be judged of by any one who will look at the etchings in which Crome has reproduced scraps of Norfolk with all the vividness and charm of Nature.

We landed at Martham Staithe — the village wharf—but on ground which was once an impassable swamp, and now felt something like india-rubber under foot, and walked up to the church. It was in course of restoration, at the cost, we were told, of the mistress of Rollesby Hall: and what with decorated mouldings and tracery, and excellent carving within, showed signs of becoming a fair specimen of modern imitative art.

An exclamation of surprise and pleasure broke

from me as we stepped out and looked round on the prospect from the tower-top. Viewed from that elevation common and familiar features appeared to wear an unusual charm, heightened at the time by sunshine and a breeze that raised mimic waves on the green and purple breadths of grass. And the village itself, situate on an acclivity of wheat-fields, looks so respectable with good old houses and well-kept gardens, and lanes shaded by tall trees branching off in various directions, and the vicarage with thatched roof nestling so snugly in the midst of all, that Martham might be taken as a specimen of a model village, with the advantage that its pleasantness owes more to Nature than to formal Art. And to all this there is the contrast of the blue sea on the east, and the marshes and Broads on the west. Horsey Mere looked as if it lay close under the sand-hills, and there we saw the yacht with all sail set and burgee flying. A proud man was the Captain as he tacked to and fro, and having room enough made the *Adelaide* sail her very best. In the south-west the spire of Norwich still cuts the horizon: in the north-east the white tops of the lighthouses at Happisburgh appear above the trees.

The road to Winterton, by which we left the village, runs along a low brow, whence to the north-east the views over Somerton Broad present many pretty touches of lake scenery, blue rippling water embraced by foliage. We passed Burnley Hall — an edifice of red brick—the seat of the late Joseph Hume. Then we came to loose sandy roads, and the street of Winterton, which is closed at the seaward end by the sand-hill. Here also the earning of the net-makers was a groat

a day. "Sell ye a net cheap, master," they said as we passed, "twenty yards for a shillin'." The church-tower, one hundred and twenty-five feet high, is a grand specimen of the local style. The columns along the nave are oak, tall solid stems of oak, resting on brick bases. The pulpit, stuck in the middle of what may be described as an ugly pair of wooden compasses stretching across the chancel arch, is a ludicrous deformity.

Two hundred vessels, including a sprinkling of steamers, were in sight from the light-house gallery. Winterton Ness is the most dangerous headland between the Thames and Tweed; but who thinks of danger when the sun shines bright and the sea makes a noise as if for very gladness?

The shore line presents a strong contrast: one side of the ridge an apparently boundless expanse of green; the other a barren sandy waste, gleaming white, with tawny patches here and there—the exercise-ground of the destroyer. How the tides would roll and rush across those green pastures could they find a way through the thin-looking barrier as they did at the close of the last century! There are old channels now choked with sand or rushes, which the fishermen talk about as having formerly been open from the Broads to the sea. And traces remain of yet older changes, which are studies for geologists.

With this view and that at Caister, we thought we had seen enough of this part of the Norfolk coast, so with a bag of potatoes which we bought from the light-house keeper to replenish our stock, we set out to

rejoin the yacht. From the loose toilsome slopes of the sand-hills we passed a belt of furze on firmer ground; then to the pastures, by the Warrener's house standing in a very lonely spot; and as straight as we could go towards a distant windmill, baffled at times by ditches and drains that were too wide to be jumped and too deep to be waded. Haymakers were busy all around; but it appeared to me that such coarse stalky-looking hay as they were turning and tossing was not worth the trouble. A hollow which we crossed, so thickly grown up with rushes as to look almost solid, was one of the old channels said to have had formerly an outlet to the sea. Now all the surplus moisture and drainage creeps away to the Thurn, and finds its way to the sea by a long and indirect course. At length we came to a road, which by the time we had walked ten miles since our landing at Martham Staithe, brought us to a dyke where we stepped once more on board the yacht.

The Captain presently quanted from the dyke into Horsey, and away we sailed with a fine breeze across the mere. The extent is one hundred and twenty acres. I wanted to know why in this instance the term *mere* was retained; but the Captain could not tell. Is it because it is not the expanded part of a river—a *Broad?*

In looking round from the middle of the mere we saw eleven church-towers; and presently when the sun fell low we beheld one of the sights which can be seen only in these marshy lowlands. A flush of pale orange stole softly into the western sky, mounting higher and higher until all above and around us

glistened with the beautiful light. It was a wonderful spectacle! Had we glided into fairyland unawares? The mere, as if transmuted into liquid sunshine, dazzled our eyes with its bright expanse of ripples, and left us a little uncertain where to look for the meeting line between water and sky, so completely were they interfused. It was involved in a halo; for the reeds and sedges around the brim, sharing in the transmutation, flickered and scintillated like rays and beads of gold, and in that halo the quiescent and the quivering were blended. Glorious indeed is the magic of Nature! And that glory shone on our faces as we sailed on; and if ever I longed to absorb and retain the light of heaven, it was then.

Too soon the spell was broken. The great round sun sank out of sight, and the glory vanished, and sedge, reed, and ripple resumed their place among common things, and dusk came on so quickly that our passage through Heigham Sound, beset by shallows, made the Captain anxious. Even his experienced eye was puzzled to make out the landmarks in the doubtful light. How the reed birds chattered as we drove through their darkening haunts. Then we emerged upon Hickling Broad, a lake three miles round, very shallow, and swarming with fish and birds. "I have seen ducks here as thick as herrings," said the Captain. The breeze freshened as night came on, and blew us rapidly across the Broad and into Candle Dyke, which in the gloom appeared to be a rushy ditch bent into the greatest possible number of curves. It led us into the Thurn, down which we sailed to the

Bure, and a little before midnight we moored to the bank opposite St Benet's Abbey.

In this late voyaging a strange feeling was inspired by the influences of the scene. If among hills there be a sense of imprisonment, here it was of vast loneliness, as if we were lost out of the world, and had to go sailing on through the gloom for ever. The Captain, moved to talk of the time when at all hours of the day and night he was steering his wherry along the dim pathway, said he used to fancy the ripple spoke to him of many things, and that the creaking vane was an audible voice. I had wondered how he found his way all through the night; and now I saw that though the sky was cloudy, there was always a pale gray gleam stretching before us, between the rough darkly confused banks, showing the course of the river.

CHAPTER XIII.

Last day of Yachting—The Ant—Ludham—Missing Alms-box—Touches of Colour—Queen Elizabeth's Arms—The ruined Grange—How Hill—Red-weed—Contrasted Landscapes—A Reminiscence of Cowper—William of Wykeham—Curious Phenomenon of Sound—The Gravel Mound—Wherry Sailing *versus* Yacht Sailing—Reed Stack—Irstead Shoals—A Watery Bower—Irstead Church—A Reed Roof lozeugy—Irstead Rectory—A Disappointment—Irstead Broad—High Fen Dyke—Swans and Cygnets—Fairy-like Pools—The Reed Harvest—Make and Shoof—The Eynd—Charm usurped by Chill—A few Brame—A Water-Smoke—A Query for Philologists—Stalham—The Last Salad.

This is our last day of yachting. It opens gray and chill; without brightness in the sky or on the water. But there is a good wind, which speeds us briskly up the river to the mouth of the Ant, a narrow winding stream that falls in on the left bank. Up this we sailed between low rushy shores to Ludham-bridge, and there leaving the Captain to pursue his devious course, walked to the village, where the Vicar had a trifle of business to attend to. In the church we saw a very primitive relic: a thick log of oak standing upright with a hole chopped out of its upper end in which at one time the alms-box was secured. The old rusty nails which held it, and the thick heavy lid well strapped with iron and with four clasps, still remain;

but the box itself has been torn away, and the empty hole is a lasting reproach to the parish. The screen yet stands in place, and shows traces of the scarlet, purple, and gold that made it look resplendent in the days when mass was sung behind it. On the lower panels, half concealed by a seat, are figures of saints, carefully executed. *Made in the yer of ower lord god* 1496 is an inscription still faintly readable on one of the rails. And high up on the chancel arch hangs a canvas, bearing what the sexton calls "Queen Elizabeth's Arms." Did her royal Majesty ever make a progress to this remote village?

Here at Ludham stood the Grange, a farm-residence of the Abbots of St Benet's, subsequently transformed into a bishop's palace, until the greater part was destroyed by fire in 1611. After that the ruin was incorporated with a farm-house, and the chapel became a granary.

Then we walked by field-paths to How Hill, a big knoll, thickly covered with oat-grass, from the top of which we had a pleasant view, and enjoyed the scent of elder blossom wafted up from below. While we were gazing the clouds broke and the landscape smiled all at once in bright sunshine. There beneath us lay the features with which we had become familiar; broad reedy flats, pastures of various colour, from bright green to bronze and purple, coarse swamps, bright patches of poppies, 'red-weed' in Norfolk speech, irregular patches of water, windmills and dykes, and the narrow stream repeating its lazy curves across the vast level. The yacht came prettily up, making for the place of rendezvous.

The knoll is the advanced post of a somewhat hilly district abutting on the marshes, and by turning half round we look upon a contrasted landscape: Ludham village nestled among trees; lanes winding and falling between thick hedgerows, that beautify the undulating fields, with many 'pollens,' to use the native term for pollards, among their timber. Northwards appear Catfield church, and grand masses of trees in the park, relieved by the dark blue gleam of a lake. Cowper once visited Catfield, the residence of his uncle, and thence took a trip to the lighthouses of Happisburgh, which may be seen rising on a rough horizon formed by the sand-hills of the coast. We found a novel pleasure in looking from a landscape that seemed nearly all trees, with here and there a red roof or thatched gable peeping up, to the broad watery levels where trees are very few and far distant; and we thought that Norwich artists might visit the spot with profit to art and to themselves. North-westwards, where the two landscapes meet, Irstead Broad sparkles in the sun, and there stands the church of which William of Wykeham was once rector. A little to the right are seen Barton church and Broad, and then the tall tower of Ingham, of which we shall perhaps get a nearer view to-morrow.

On our return to the yacht the Captain told us that while passing the knoll, although a quarter of a mile distant, he had distinctly heard our conversation; and by way of proof recited a remark which I had made to the Vicar, speaking in my usual tone. Was it a reverberation from the mainsail of the sound borne on the breeze that caught the Captain's ear?

Presently we saw in a marsh on our left a low broad mound of solid gravel, which set us questioning as to how it came there. Wherrymen, said the Captain, have a tradition that an old gravel causeway crosses Irstead Broad, and appears in other parts of the neighbourhood: which was not a satisfactory answer.

The river winding more and more, necessitated use of the quant, while a couple of wherries coming up astern proved the superiority of their capabilities, by sailing close to the wind, and round the bends where our sail had to be hauled down. This set me thinking that a wherry-rigged yacht would be the best and most commodious for agreeable navigation of these Norfolk rivers.

From time to time we passed large conical stacks of reeds set up to dry. Then we came to Irstead Shoals, where the water is so clear and shallow between the bushy banks, that you can see the fish darting across the yellow gravel. Here, as the Captain says, "'tis touch and go," and he steers as exactly as possible in the middle of the crooked channel, while here and there we feel the grating of our keel upon the bottom. In places the low banks are covered with huge heaps of coarse reedy grass, lying handy for transport to the cattle-stalls and straw-yards of graziers. The Captain remembers the time when this shoaly strait was a winding bower, formed by the blackthorns and alders that stretched their branches all across the channel. "On a sunshiny day," he says, "it was the prettiest sight I ever see. It was green leaves everywhere: this side and that side, over-head, and under-

neath. Sometimes I used to think the shadows below looked prettier than the trees theirselves."

Near the outlet upon the Broad we moored, and walked across a spongy flat, in which 'seggs' grow abundantly, to the clerk's cottage. It is a lonely dwelling and dreary enough in winter, when all around is covered with water. But, as the placid inmate remarked, "there's plenty o' skatin' for them as is fond of it." "He's a clever old fellow," said the Captain, meaning kind, as he limped across a wheat-field to show us the church; a small edifice with porch and parvise, and with interior evidence of the care and good taste of the rector—"the Reverend Gunn," as his parishioners call him, after the Norfolk manner. The white paint has been scraped off the old oaken seat-ends, and all the pews have been abolished except one which belongs, said the clerk, to an old gentleman. The under side of the thatch shows between the rafters with a pleasing arrangement of the reeds, which may be described as lozengy. As I afterwards saw, a similar style prevails in the open roofs of other churches in the county. The font looks old enough to have been used by William of Wykeham.

The country round about is very quiet and pretty, which beguiled our walk to Irstead rectory, a mile farther, where I hoped to deliver a letter of introduction. The rear of the house, all covered with ivy, stands towards the road; at an open door we spoke to two handmaidens whose comeliness and behaviour were quite in keeping with a clergyman's residence, and had the disappointment to learn that the rector and his wife had gone to Norwich. I heard some weeks after-

wards that on his return he started on our trail, and followed us to the coast, but through want of time failed to overtake us.

With all sail set and burgee flying, we had a blithe stretch across Irstead Broad, through the channel connecting with Barton Broad, past Barton Hall, the seat of Sir Jacob Preston, then by a series of tacks into High Fen Dyke, or 'deek,' as wherrymen call it. How the swans and cygnets hissed as we pushed through their quiet haunts. You might have fancied they had an eye for beauty, for they confined themselves to small open pools among the reeds where water-lilies grow in almost incredible profusion. Some of the flowery patches seen through their thin spiry screen had an exquisite fairy-like appearance. I could have lingered there for hours gliding from one translucent spot to another, and into and out of most wonderful mazes of interlacing shadows. As it was we had added one more to our stock of agreeable reminiscences.

Narrower and shallower becomes the channel, and there are more reeds to be seen than water. "Stalham reeds," says the Captain, "are reckoned the best in Norfolk. Christmas is the time for cuttin'; but not for boulders; they 're cut in summer-time." Boulders are bulrushes.

Suddenly an eynd came over, cold and heavy, like a November fog, and with the brightness all the beauty disappeared; and the effects of the change were not less remarkable than its suddenness. The trees seemed to shrink and vanish; the reeds rustled hoarsely in the damp air that made me shiver even in my over-

coat, and the glades and bights that looked so lovely in the sunshine now seemed fit only for slimy reptiles. Even the chatter of the reed-birds had lost its charm. "The wind blaws cauld," said an angler from his boat as we passed, and told us he had caught "a few brame." Then the Captain, recognizing him as an old acquaintance, asked "How ah ye, baw?" and the answer came, "I daun't feel proud this cauld efternewn."

The eynd, or water-smoke, as it is called in Norfolk, is a remarkable phenomenon, occurring mostly between spring and autumn, and with peculiar suddenness. All at once a damp cold mist sets in from the sea, and spreads at times many miles inland, refreshing the vegetation, but imparting a dreary aspect to the landscape. Sometimes it remains the whole day; at others not more than an hour or two, then gradually vanishes. The term water-smoke well describes it, for it has a faint smoky appearance as if entirely distinct from ordinary fog.

I have made many inquiries concerning this curious word—eynd, among dwellers in Norfolk and philologists, in the hope of learning at least how to spell it, but in vain. Equally fruitless has been my search for it in print, so I can only spell it at a venture, and put it forth here in the hope that some etymologist acquainted therewith will have the kindness to publish his knowledge.

At length our reedy navigation ended in a creek up which we pushed to the staithe of Stalham. After so much voyaging it was a surprise to be told that this town is not more than fifteen miles from Norwich. It

is a little metropolis for the marsh country, with a bowling-green, and a church built of sea-cobbles, some placed zig-zag wise. The sight of a wherry discharging a cargo of marl at the head of the creek reminded me that marl was dug and used as a fertilizer in Norfolk more than five hundred years ago.

Then for the last time I cooked the dinner, and took especial pains with the salad, so as to leave an agreeable impression on the Vicar's palate. Many a man has been canonized for deeds far less praiseworthy than my salads of the *Adelaide*.

CHAPTER XIV.

From Yachting to Walking—Ingham—Sir Oliver's Tomb—Stothard's Drawings—Grotesque Hat-rail—Ruins and Trees—Lessingham—Hempstead—Queer Reading-desk—The Sea-shore—The lone Tower of Eccles—Consumpta per Mare—The Marum Hills—Happisburgh—Ancient Forest—Mammaliferous Crag—Walcot Gap—Landing the Coal—Witton Hall—Picturesque Wall—Bromholm Priory—A Ruin with Incongruities—Big Barns—Miraculous Cross—A Touch from Chaucer—The Cliff again—Two-and-twenty Church-towers—Cobbett's Comment—Mundesley—Sir Charles Lyell on the Ancient River-bed—Reminiscences of Cowper—Picturesque Cliffs—A Bunch of Churches—Landslips—Overstrand—A Prey to the Sea—The Lighthouse—Cromer—A Churchman's Triumph.

BREAKFAST was no sooner over the next morning than we shouldered our knapsacks, said good-bye to the Captain, left him to sail back to Wroxham, and betook ourselves to a steady walk; the Vicar, who was a little mistrustful as to his legs, already wondering where we should sleep.

We came first to Ingham. The church, which we saw from the knoll yesterday, has, so to speak, seen better days. Judging from the remains of a grand west window, of a carved stone screen, of venerable stalls and old fall-seats, and the traces of noble brasses, and the stately tombs of Oliver de Ingham and other knights, it was at one time a proud edifice. The tombs

are very interesting specimens of mediæval sculpture, with statuettes in niches along the side, notwithstanding mutilation and Time's slow waste. Sir Oliver's is one of those figured by Stothard junior in his *Monumental Antiquities*. It is recorded of the artist that he spent three long days in studying the tomb before he put pencil to paper, mastering all the details, and apprehending the form until his mind being thoroughly imbued, his hand produced an accurate representation. In this way did he elaborate those admirable drawings prized by all true students of antiquarian art.

As if for contrast a hat-rail is fixed all across the nave. It may be very convenient, but when crowded with rustic hats and caps must look somewhat grotesque. As well might a squire fix a hat-rail across his entrance hall.

There is something to interest us outside: the remains of a college founded by Sir Oliver, the inmates of which were required to pray for and deliver the Christians held captive by the Turks. A broken stair, fragments of arches, one of which crosses the path with a sweep of ivy, a picturesque old oak, and a magnificent thorn, present us with a variety of pleasing effects, and of subjects to talk about on the way.

We walked on through Lessingham to Hempstead, where the clergyman, an acquaintance of the Vicar's, shewed us the church. The pulpit is one of those described as Jacobean; but the style of the reading-desk can be defined only as queer. It has been patched and repaired with panels cut out of the excellent screen, so that whenever the people look towards the reader they see old pictures of saints, one of the devil with a rope

round his neck, and a strange jumble of old pew-ends. Does the sight assist their devotions? Another peculiarity of this part of the county is that there are no altar-rails across the chancel, and no graves on the northern side of the church-yard.

Then we crossed fields and went down a loak into a bare landscape, which became more and more sandy. Presently we saw the top of an old weather-beaten tower peeping over a sand-hill, and became aware of a deep roar. Ankle deep we trudged up the loose inner slope, and from the summit beheld the broad expanse of waters, and

"Heard Ocean's merry noise, his billowy laugh,"

and breathed his quickening breath.

To the right and left stretches a broad sandy shore, backed by rough hills, and drifts that look beautifully smooth and inviting to the foot, but will swallow you leg-deep when trodden on. At the outer foot of the slope stands the tower, built of sea-cobbles, circular at the base, and octagonal above. On its seaward side a nave and chancel are traceable by the remains of walls half-buried in the sand. What a lonely relic, and melancholy withal; telling mutely of destruction in days long past. Of the two thousand acres that once formed the parish of Eccles, there are now not more than two hundred and fifty. The others with fields and houses have been devoured by the waves, and the desolate church-tower, standing there in the waste, is an impressive memorial of ocean's havoc. It is said that when tides are at their lowest the old foundations can be discovered far to seawards. *Consumpta per*

mare is a phrase that may be read in old maps of the Norfolk coast.

The great bulge which East Anglia makes towards the Low Countries begins to fall off at Winterton, and here at Eccles the shore-line trends rapidly north-westwards. Very toilsome did we find it walking through the loose sand, at the foot of the ragged-looking hills, which for miles are known as the Marum Hills: marum being another name for the tough *arundo*, that keeps them from blowing away. What a relief it was after a weary sliding backwards with every step, to see a low clay cliff that rose gradually higher and afforded us firm footing. At Hazebro', as Happisburgh is called, the height is about forty feet, whereby the lighthouses, built a quarter-mile apart, have a good elevation. Lights are much needed here, for the coast is beset by shoals; and the Leman and Ower and Hasbro' floating-lights shed their warning gleam right across the restless waters: restless with vexed tidal currents as well as winds. The great tide-wave sweeping down from the north is so much checked by the shoals of the Norfolk coast, that its speed is lessened by two-thirds, and many perplexing eddies are produced.

The village has an hotel, a bowling-green, and one bathing-machine, and looks somewhat picturesque with its old gabled cottages, relics of thatch, and steep road leading down to the green inland levels. It was one of the places visited by the melancholy Cowper. Here, too, there are signs of encroachment: isolated hummocks of clay on the shore, and ugly gaps washed out of the cliffs. The clerk, with whom we had a talk

while dinner was getting ready, told us that a hundred yards of the land had been washed away within his remembrance.

Geologists, exploring the coast hereabouts, have discovered a deeply buried forest in which the fossil remains of hippopotamus, rhinoceros, there species of elephant, the beaver, whale, and walrus, have been found associated with trees and plants, of species which still exist. Mr Gunn, by his discoveries alone, has added largely to the resources of palæontologists. And Sir Charles Lyell explains, "The least interrupted series of consecutive documents to which we can refer in the British Islands when we desire to connect the tertiary with the post-tertiary periods are found in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex." And from Cromer to beyond Lowestoft the wayfarer will have frequent opportunity to exercise his critical faculty in the "mammaliferous crag" that constitutes so large a part of the cliffs; and to note the deposits, full of sea-shells, which now overlie the ancient forest.

A path alive with wild flowers awaited us as we again set forth, and by the increasing elevation of the cliffs we got views over land as well as sea; of the low point and coast-line all the way to Mundesley, and far off a dark ridge of wood above Cromer. Broad pastures and fields of wheat and barley, with here and there a clump or long swell of trees, and a sprinkling of church-towers, are the principal features in the landscape.

At Walcot Gap we saw how these outlying villages import their supply of coal. A vessel arrives during the summer months, and rides off at anchor until the weather be propitious, then comes on shore on the top

of high water, and is hauled as far up as possible by the strong capstan fixed at the head of the Gap. Then on sight of the usual signal, the neighbouring farmers send teams and broad-wheeled tumbrils, which set to work as the tide falls, and if the sand be not too soft and they work with a will, the whole cargo will be carried from the vessel to the storehouses by the Gap in a single tide.

As we turned from the Gap into a grassy lane, Witton Hall, and its woods, the seat of Lord Wodehouse, were on our left. The wall on one side of the lane was itself worth turning aside to see, apart from what it inclosed. Built of cobbles of various sizes, the countless bulges of white, blue, and gray, bleached by age and weather, have a singularly pleasing aspect, as each appears set in a dark hollow ring. Here and there it is overgrown with ivy, long grasses, and docks, and all along its base runs the soft green carpet, in which a pedestrian delights. At the end of the wall we came to a gateway, a great pointed arch, which has a guard-room or porter's lodge on each side, and through it we pass to the ruins of Bromholm Priory. Within is a farm-yard; and there is the chapel and the east window, a grand obtuse empty arch, which we saw from the cliff. A narrow pointed window, with the mouldings still in place, appears in each side-wall, and recesses to match. The charm of the old gray stones is enhanced by the masses of ivy that cling thereon, forming great curtains with frieze and cornice; and in the north-east corner rises a thick stem that looks like a beautifully-twisted column. The refectory is similarly adorned; but there is a want of harmony between these

combinations of masonry and foliage, and stacks of old timber leaning against the walls, and carts and wagons, and big hayricks, and beds of nettles. The thought occurs that what is bad now may become worse for want of care. The two great barns still stand to testify of the goodly harvests reaped in olden time from the Priory fields. And the gate-house remains, showing Norman and pointed arches, with good capitals to the shafts, and deep window recesses, and other touches of the mason's art lapsed into base uses—a shelter for rubbish and lumber. The roof was blown off by the Whitsuntide gale and had not been replaced. We thought that the whole place looked best from the fields, across which we tramped to regain the cliff, the square forms contrasting well with the rounded masses of ivy.

Seven centuries, in imperial phrase, there look down on the visitor of to-day. It was in 1113 that the Priory was founded by William de Glandeville. Very famous did it become, for there was preserved the most precious of relics—a cross made of a portion of the very Cross of Calvary. No wonder that it possessed a miraculous influence, and restored to sight all the blind pilgrims who knelt before it and touched it with their hands, and raised thirty-nine from the dead. It was invoked too by believers at a distance. "Helpe, holy crois of Bromeholme!" cried the Miller's wife, waking in sudden fright, as may be read in Chaucer.

> "And bidde the Roode of Bromholm
> Brynge me out of dette,"

sings Piers Plowman with quaint humour.

The *Paston Letters* include one written by Robert

Prior of Bromholm to John Paston "his sovereign," soliciting advice and aid to enable him to join Walter Lyhart, Bishop of Norwich, who was then ambassador to Savoy.

The cliff where we again struck the path is from sixty to eighty feet in height, in some places forming a long broken slope, in others more or less perpendicular, with grassy ledges where slips have occurred, and of various colours, black, brown, blue, gray, yellow, and red. And beneath there spread a belt of rough gray shingle, a smooth and widening margin of brown sand, and an ever-shifting belt of white foam. The whole line of coast from Happisburgh to Mundesley is visible, and looking inland we can count twenty-two church-towers, among which Palling tower marks the vicinity of Horsey Mere, the scene of our aquatics three days ago; and Paston tower reminds us that there are the tombs of the family with whose name and history we have so long been familiar. Here again we hear of pirates kidnapping sundry persons. "And," says Agnes Paston writing to her son, "they have thys weke takyn iiij vesselys of Wyntyrton, and Happysborough, and Ecles. Men be sore aferd for takyn of me for ther ben x grete vesselys of the enemyis. God geve grace that the see may be better kepte than it is now or ellys it shall ben a perylous dwellyng by the se cost."

Cobbett, treating of the eastern counties in his *Rural Rides*, remarks that "their great drawbacks are their flatness and their want of fine woods." But he praises the farming and the churches, and notices their being built with scarcely an exception on the highest site within the parish. "These churches," he argues,

"prove that the people of Norfolk and Suffolk were always a superior people in point of wealth, while the size of them proves that the country parts were, at one time, a great deal more populous than they now are." This was written in 1821.

Mundesley looked lively as we descended the long slope to its cluster of houses on the edge of the cliff, and others straggling along the upland in its rear. Less populous than Cromer, it is on that account preferred by a large class of visitors, who find here broad sands and breezy heights for health and recreation. Most of the houses are built of brick with panels of cobbles: of the latter the beach furnishes a never-failing supply.

On our way through the place we crossed a noisy stream—the Mun, that turns a mill and dashes down a hollow, which filled with trees has a pretty effect in front of the houses. The descent to the shore is by steep zig-zag paths on the face of the gravelly cliff, overlooked by what appears to be a formidable bastion, but is only a sloping wall built to protect the estate that lies behind it.

The gravel here is that of an ancient river-bed, concerning which Sir Charles Lyell remarks there is great analogy between the Mundesley deposits and those of Hoxne, in the valley of the Waveney, where ancient flint implements have been dug up. And he considers that we need not despair of some day finding in these cliff-gravels weapons and other relics of man's existence. "If any such lie hid in these strata," he continues, "and should hereafter be revealed to us, they would carry back the antiquity of man to a distance of time

probably more than twice as great as that which separates our era from that of the most ancient of the tool-bearing gravels yet discovered in Picardy, or elsewhere."

While sauntering on the beach let us not forget that Cowper came to Mundesley in August, 1795. Few who love good poetry, written when poetry was very rare, would willingly forego the recollection that the hapless bard journeyed hither to seek that which so often fled him—health. The sound of the breakers soothed him; he walked much on the sand till his eyes could no longer bear the irritation of cold wind and salt spray, and made excursions to Happisburgh and other places in the neighbourhood. In one of his letters he writes,—"My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit when I add that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me."

As we go onwards the height of the cliffs increases, and still rises as far as we can see. The frequent stiles made of old ship-timber are suggestive of wrecks. The path is thickly bordered by 'luck,' as the natives call the pretty yellow flower of the kidney-vetch, and the lotus, and white and red campion. And the cliff is so irregular with many slips, foreshores, patches of grass and coltsfoot, and slopes of gray, red, and yellow, and a grassy undercliff with a pond in the hollow, and a marly bluff, and gullies and chines, as to look strikingly

picturesque. Truly the sojourners at Cromer and Mundesley have a pleasant cliff-walk between the two places.

Trimmingham church, seen on a bold height away to the left, reminds us that we have come to the locality to which the rhyming proverb applies,—

> "Gimmingham, Trimmingham, Knapton, and Trunch,
> North Repps, and South Repps, are all of a bunch;"

some of these churches being among the twenty-two which we counted on the other side of Mundesley. Trimmingham was formerly a much neglected parish; the labourers used to go round shouting 'largesse' after harvest; but in 1856 the Buxtons restored the church, built new cottages and a school, and celebrated the good work by such a harvest-home as the parish had never before witnessed.

A little farther and we passed Sidestrand church, which with its low round tower stands on a lonely spot so near the sea that the worshippers hear the voice of the deep in its every mood. Then more landslips appeared on our right, some newly fallen, others fixed with a rough green coat, and here and there half-detached bluffs and pinnacles standing up between; and one great wild slope has somewhat the appearance of a glacier apart from the colour, and the yellow sand blown into its many crevices seem bright as metallic veins. The path, though still flowery, is beset with numerous stiles, and has many ins and outs and ups and downs, and in some places is cut in two by treacherous gaps. Then we came to Overstrand and saw fresh signs of havoc, for the sea has climbed up towards the

few houses, and devoured the cliff in their front till scarcely the road is left, and the battered precipice is protected by a hastily erected sheathing of beams and boards. The fishermen who were oiling their nets in readiness for tanning told us, in a tone that savoured of resignation, that they expected the next breach would take away their houses.

Higher and higher rose the path to a rounded summit covered with bracken. We were trudging slowly across its flank when a bright light shone in our eyes: it was the revolver of Cromer lighthouse, and minute by minute its ray darted across the dusk. Far, far below us sounded the sea as we took an easier pace along the brow, passing between the light and an old round tower near the edge of the cliff, and came to the head of a rough slope, and saw Cromer lying beneath in a great hollow curve. We passed groups of visitors taking their evening stroll before supper; crossed a bridge; paced along a narrow in-and-out terrace, and as the clock struck nine were comfortably lodged at the *Red Lion.*

A proud man was the Vicar. It was the first long walk he had ever walked; and to have accomplished twenty-four miles in one day was a triumph about which he talked till bed-time.

CHAPTER XV.

Cromer—Pleasant Environment—The Cliff—The Devil's Throat—List of Visitors—A fresh Start—Dilapidated Chancel—Floral Abundance—Dr Daubeny on Chalk and Flowers—Waste of the Cliffs—Musing Cove—Salutary Water-smokes—Runton—Mereing Balks—Beeston Gap—Beacon Hill—Beeston Regis—Priory—Fishing with a Gun—Tiny Paper-mill—Ways and Means in Sheringham—Likewise and Also—Great Sea Banks—Change of Scene—Waybourn—The Telegraph—Nature's Carpet—Yes, you is—Cley—Old-fashioned Relics—Dutch Baskets—Another Water-smoke—Blakeney—A Lesson in Broiling wanted—Melancholy Marshes—Stiffkey—An Invitation to Supper—Sir Nicholas Bacon's old House—A dark Walk—Wells.

CROMER is a pleasant place, greeting the visitor with prospects in which the only level is the North Sea, and hence contrasting favourably with other parts of the Norfolk coast, and remarkable as showing but one church-tower. Foulness, the great bluff crowned by the lighthouse, more than two hundred feet in height, is regarded by natives from the flat country as a considerable mountain. Looking from its summit we see on the landward side nothing but hill and vale, slopes of fern and gorse, crests of wood, hollows of copse, and rolling fields—a landscape suggestive of agreeable walks. On the other side we look forth upon the broad blue waters, the scene of the sun's rising,

and, to the surprise of visitors who forget how rapidly the coast beyond Cromer recedes to the west, of his setting. The town lies compact in the half hollow below the heights, protected in front by four timber break-waters that stretch in black lines across the sand, and by a short wooden jetty. The jutting undercliff, coated with grass and weeds, shows scarcely a sign of having been disturbed since 1832, when a slip took place, which brought the edge of the cliff so near to the tower—not more than eight paces at the time I measured it—that the Trinity Board built a new light-house, on the rise, two hundred and fifty yards to the rear. The bay beneath has an evil reputation, and is known among seafaring folk as the 'Devil's Throat;' for a ship once driven therein by stress of weather is in perilous chance of wreck.

Viewed from the end of the jetty the town seems to be crowding itself into all the best places nearest the sea, giving preference to the hotels. The beach displays the usual array of boats and bathing-machines; but at the time we saw them they appeared to be but little in request, for here, as elsewhere, everybody complained that visitors were kept away by the chilly weather. The lady who showed us the list of visitors at the bookseller's shop, begged us to enter our names, though we were but birds of passage, on the plea that every little helped in making up a number.

It was near noon when we started afresh on our walk. As we passed the church the Vicar remembered that he had once preached a sermon therein. The chancel, as in other instances throughout the county, is a ruin, owing, as some explain, to the neglect that

followed the quarrels between monks and laity for possession. The cowls got the eastern part, and were compelled in time to abandon it to dilapidation.

Alike surprising and delightful was the sight of the prodigious numbers of wild flowers among which we were presently walking. The ground seemed almost dazzling with the bright variety of colours, rivalling the charm of an Alpine pasture. On no other part of the English coast have I seen so many. According to Prof. Babington there are one thousand seven hundred and sixty-seven species of flowering-plants in Britain; and of these one thousand and sixty-seven are found in Norfolk. In other counties the number is not more than half. This floral luxuriance is doubtless appreciated by sojourners at Cromer. Perhaps the presence of chalk and marl in the cliffs may have something to do with it; for Dr Daubeny tells us that "angiospermous plants appear to have come in with the chalk, as if intended to embellish the mansion in preparation for man to occupy, and thus to minister to the special enjoyment of the only creature endowed with faculties capable of deriving pleasure from their contemplation."

The cliffs here are eighty feet high, and are liable to rude deprivations of their pretty coronet. "Where is the cottage that stood here two years ago?" asked the Vicar of a boy as we passed acres of outspread herring-nets. "'T was pulled down because they thowt 't would soon goo," was the answer. Will the traveller who walks here for his holiday a thousand years hence, find the cliff then traversing that ferny mound on our

left, which has some remains of a Roman camp on its summit?

Below Runton we crossed a curious little cove, in which a few herring-boats lay rocking drowsily on the gentle swell. A fit place it seems for one who walks out with a book in his pocket to find a resting-nook. How pleasant it would be, reclined on that soft heap of nets, to muse away a sunshiny hour, soothed by the easy motion and the influence of sound—"O mystic Sound!" says the poet, "what heart can keep aloof, if summoned to acknowledge thy bland sway?"

> "There resting on our bank of thought
> We listen, till our soul
> The voices of the waves has caught,—
> The music of their roll."

A rustic, who was hoeing in a field a little farther on, stood leaning on his implement while we had a talk about flowers and other local things. The bugloss he called 'blue glass,' and white clover 'wild-suckling;' and he thought the bird's-foot trefoil and corn-cockle "as purty as garden-flowers." In his boyish days he used to blow off the white heads of dandelions to know the time of day: so many puffs, the same was the hour. On my putting a question concerning the eynds, he answered, "Ah, ye mean the water-smokes. They dew come sudden, let the day be ever so clear. But they save the crops many a time from bein' scorched up wuss than they would be in droughty weather. If 't warn't for them water-smokes there would n't be a crop on our light lands. But we ain't had no scorchin' yet this summer." The contrast be-

tween western and eastern England as regards moisture is striking: the west has a yearly average of seventy-five more wet days than the east, and a rainfall nearly five times greater: a fact due to difference of elevation as well as to winds. The western heights touch four thousand feet; the highest ground in Norfolk and Suffolk is about three hundred feet.

A little farther and a gulley crossing the path presented us with the pretty sight of a rill leaping down in three cascades to the shore. Beyond it we came to a part of the uninclosed parish of Runton, in which an ancient rural practice still prevails; namely, the separation of field from field, not by hedges or fences, but by a strip of land a rod in width, called a balk or mereing-balk; in which term we have the old Saxon word for boundary. The balk is never ploughed or dug, and is commonly overgrown with grass, on which horses and cattle are tethered to feed; and in places where you can see over a broad surface, as by Runton Gap, the numerous rectangular green stripes have a singular effect.

Here a spit of shingle projects from the shore, and the sand gives place to a mixture of chalk and shingle, very disagreeable to walk on. Then having crossed Beeston Gap, we mounted to the top of Beacon Hill by a gentle grassy slope, and sat down for half an hour to enjoy the pleasant prospect; the noise of the sea, rendered musical by distance, sounding in our ears the while. About four miles to our left we could see Cromer Church and Lighthouse: near the hill foot, on the right, appeared part of Sheringham, a village of three separate clusters of houses, the largest nearest

the sea; and in the broad vale between us and the heights of fern and wood, lies the little village of Beeston Regis, with its church, windmill, and ruins of a priory. Looking along the coast we saw, not with gladness, that we were soon to exchange the cliffs for flats of marsh and sand.

As we were descending the hill to the ruins I picked out from the soft green turf a flint that was so good an example of an axe of Nature's fashioning, that I brought it away in my knapsack to use as evidence in the then lively controversy about ancient flint implements. As a test for comparison it has proved useful.

The Priory was founded in the days of King John. The ruins are picturesque only in some of their accidents and details, not as a whole: here and there a buttress arrests your eye, or a sweep of mouldings, or the fragments of a cloister-like range, or the broken ivy-capped walls that environ an old tower and gaping east window. The small landscape which appears as if set in a frame, by the western doorway, has a very pleasing effect. And the rows of tall trees bordering the ground, with ditches between, form avenues that contrast in height and colour with the silver gray of neighbouring willows. We saw a boy with gun in hand creeping along the side of the old fish-stew. He told us he was watching for pike, and that he often captured one by shooting. This to us appeared a very novel sort of angling.

There are two village greens populous with geese, and watered by a clear, lively brook, to be crossed on the way back to the shore. With the primitive-look-

ing cottages, they form a pretty rustic scene, which changes as we approach the lower village to picturesqueness of another kind. We passed a little paper-mill, so little that we could easily believe, as a villager told us, it was "worked by a man and a baw," and came to the low gray walls, the oblong inclosures, the rugged cots, the dusty road and lanes, the festoons of brown nets, the blue and tan-coloured jumpers and jerseys, and thick rough worsted stockings hanging to dry, the buckets, barrels, baskets, tubs, lobster-pots, and women sitting at the doors mending nets, which first strike the eye as you descend the ravine into the ragged thoroughfares of lowermost Sheringham. Lobsters are perhaps its staple; for we saw many basketfuls of the struggling crustaceans, and the principal inn sports a *Lobster* as its sign. It keeps a bed or two and good bottled beer for the entertainment of visitors. We, however, had not come to tarry, and went down to the slope at which the street terminates, and had a talk with the numerous group of weather-beaten fishermen, who lounged there apparently contemplating the fleet of boats, and the furlongs of herring-nets that looked like webs of bronze upon the blue shingle. They all had the Norfolk twang in perfection, and were ready in the use of local idioms. I noticed, too, that in common with other parts of the county, they invariably used the word *likewise* instead of *also*. "Likewise herrin's we ketch," said one, whom I asked whether they fished for anything besides lobsters and mackerel.

We walked on past the coastguard station to a high bluff, whence the sea-view is extensive. But under

that sparkling blue water lie some of the great banks which have long been accumulating: the Leman, Ower, Well Bank, and Broken Svarte. The latter is the most distant, which perhaps accounts for its half Dutch name. From the bluff a sudden descent brought us to a long low range of reddish-coloured cliff, which, fronted by blue shingle and that by white foam, presented a remarkable effect. Inland a succession of heights, stretching away from Beacon Hill, have the aspect of a distant mountain-chain, and in the same direction are seen pastures smooth as lawns, and knolls so densely wooded, that Sheringham Hall is completely hidden therein. In the forward route Blakeney church, some ten miles distant, warns us of the work that lies before us. Cley appears about half way, and the shore has almost the aspect of a level plain.

The abundance of flowers was succeeded by patches of thrift, as we paced down to Waybourn and the level. Here the shingle, which has been gradually increasing in size, becomes large pebbles and big boulders, with so steep a slope to the sea that it is deep water close to the shore. A large vessel might ride at anchor within a stone's throw. Advantage is taken of this sudden fall by the telegraphers, and here the wires which cross the county from Norwich and Cromer are connected with the cable that, sunk below the reach of accident from fishing vessels, stretches away across the North Sea to Holland.

We questioned a coastguard-man as to the way along the shore, which looked swampy within the shingle. He answered that we should find it "bothersome;" "but," he added, "what is there like Nature's

carpet to walk upon?" However, we decided to take the road that runs along the inner edge of the marshes. A rustic, who could hardly speak intelligibly, so violently did he shiver with ague, told us that the ruinous state of some old buildings near the church, not easy to define, though an eminent authority thinks the tower may be Anglo-Saxon, 'was "because Oliver Cromwell knocked 'em about so." And a woman at Salthouse answered "Yes, you is," to our inquiry whether we were on the shortest road.

Cley is a dull, old-fashioned little town, one of the small ports of Norfolk, which export large quantities of wheat. Less than a hundred years ago rye was the principal crop, and wheat was imported. And here, as in all the other places in this part of the county, a large malthouse suggests abundant crops of barley. The *Queen Victoria Inn* is approached by an ancient pointed doorway and a pebbled passage. The *Fishmongers' Arms* has a porch and parvise, and a sign hanging from a beam that stretches all across the road: a true relic of olden time. In the church a small chapel, ornamented with double-headed eagles, suggests remembrance of the German merchants, who once resorted hither. The harbour is a muddy creek, in which we saw ducks luxuriously dabbling, but no vessels. On the side of the road farthest from the sea, there are sluices and a deep channel for drainage; and a wheat-field on the other side; and here and there pretty flower-gardens enliven the house-fronts.

Beyond the town we stopped at a wayside garden to buy strawberries, and during the gathering enjoyed the sight of a pleasing inland view. The fruit was

brought to us in small brown baskets made of unstripped osiers, identical in shape with those used for the same purpose at Rotterdam. Are they the results of a fashion introduced by Dutch fugitives? Nowhere else in England have I ever seen the like. In shape they resemble an incurved flower-pot, and are made small enough to contain a quart or pint only.

A little farther, and all at once another water-smoke swept across the landscape, reminding me of the pale November fogs of London, and obscuring the view beyond a distance of fifty yards. Blakeney church looked very hazy as we passed; but we could see at the north-east corner of the chancel, the turret that seems as if it were a diminutive of the tower. We surmised from its appearance that it might have been used as a beacon turret, for the church is a sea-mark; but a rector, whom we met later in the day, told us he believed it had been the place of the Sancte bell. The church has a good east window of seven lights, and a stone roof over the chancel.

Vessels of two hundred tons can come up the crooked channel across the marshes to Blakeney; but a considerable trade in grain does not make the town look lively. We sought a public-house of inviting aspect, but in vain. And though we found a willing hostess, she had never learned to cook a mutton chop. In this particular, however, she was not more incapable than hundreds of innkeepers throughout England, who have no more notion of a properly-cooked mutton chop than they have of properly-made coffee. If they would only take a trip to Barnsley, and there take a lesson in the art of broiling—such a lesson as Barnsley

knows how to give—how heartily their enterprise would be appreciated by travellers.

When we again set forward, the Vicar began to wince at the hardness of the road. It seemed cruel after the cliff-path; and he had to cross here and there into the pastures to ease his feet. Sweet, indeed, is Nature's carpet. And the water-smoke became denser, wrapping us round with damp drifts that made us shiver. The marshes on our right looked very melancholy under their veil. Their width is from one to three miles: a rough wild tract, free to sportsmen, but awkward of access except in very dry weather or frost. Opposite each village and distinguished by its name, are fresh and salt marshes, greens, broads, steeps, and other peculiar places, traversed by mud-banked streams from the ports and dotted with pools. Viewed from the sea it is a low, uninteresting coast, where you wonder that mariners can ever find the mouth of the river. And the water is shallow for some distance out, and is encumbered by banks and shoals, among which the largest are Blakeney and Stiffkey Overfalls.

As we went on, the scenery improved: trees reappear, and a bright rapid stream—the Stiffkey river—running by the roadside, enlivens the way to the village of the same name, or Stewky, as it is called by the natives. Environed by wooded hills, and with paths and lanes winding through the hollows, it ranks among the prettiest places of the county. Arthur Young while riding this way in 1770 was attracted by it, as appears from his description.

"The ride from Warham by Stukey is through a much more picturesque country than is commonly met

with in Norfolk; the road runs on the brow of the hill looking down on Stukey vale, and commanding for some distance a very complete landscape. The vale, which is composed of meadows of the finest verdure, winds in a very beautiful manner from out a thicket of woody inclosures, and retires, at the other, behind a projecting hill: an humble stream glides through it, and adds a chearfulness, which water can alone confer. The hills rise in a bold manner: they are bare of wood; but that is compensated by the thick inclosures in which the village is scattered; forming with its church in a dip of the hill, and that of Blakeney above it, in a prouder situation, a most complete and pleasing picture."

But between the village and the sea there lie the Meals, a wild waste of sand and swamp, tenanted by fowl and rabbits. Many similar places, as sportsmen well know, occur round about our coasts, particularly that one on the Cheshire shore at the mouth of the Mersey, where the word is spelt Meols. Some etymologists find its origin in moel—a hill; others argue that it means a bare sand-hill only, and is equivalent to the French *dune*.

Seeing two old towers dimly discernible beyond the church-tower we turned aside to discover what they belonged to. The church door being open, we went in, but owing to the dusk, could discern nothing satisfactorily. While we were looking about, a party of four emerged from the gloom: one of the gentlemen accosted us, and almost in the same breath invited us up to the rectory to supper. They were Mr and Mrs Rural Dean and the Rector and his wife. Leaving the

others to walk home, the Rector satisfied my curiosity as to the two old towers by leading me round to the house of which they form part,—the mansion built by Sir Nicholas Bacon, brother of the sage of Verulam. In style and appearance it resembles other houses of the same date; but it is a fragment only, all except the front having been left unfinished. The two rearward towers mark the extent of the original design, and lead us to imagine a spacious and stately residence, rivalling any erected under the Tudors. It has an advantage over many in the beauty of its situation.

It was ten o'clock when we quitted the bright hospitable dining-room, for the dark road and the raw cold night. The Rector, yielding obedience to the apostolic precept, put on his cloak and accompanied us, as did a guest of his who had travelled all the way from Devonshire for a week's shooting in the Meals. They walked with us two miles, and beguiled the gloomy way with cheerful talk, and left on our minds an agreeable impression which will not soon wear out. Two miles more, and as the clock struck eleven we paced into Wells and found comfortable quarters at *The Crown*.

The Vicar was not so blithe as on the night before. More than half of our day's travel had been on hard roads, where his exercise had proved less agreeable than on the varying paths of the shore. However, we had walked twenty-two miles, and that was something to talk about with the late guests in the bar-parlour.

CHAPTER XVI.

The English Loretto—Way to Walsingham—Pilgrims—Weary Hearts and Wily Knaves—Erasmus and the Reliques—Searching Queries—The Gate-house—A Miracle—The astonished Boy—The Conduit—The Ruins—The Wishing-Wells—Royal Pilgrims—A Worsted Man—Henry VII.—Henry VIII.—Guarded Church—Gray Friars—A Lament—Fakenham—Dereham—Cowper's House—The New Clocker—St Withburga's Well—Fidele Furtum—The Church—Aids to Worship—The old Coffer—Cowper's Tomb—Epitaph and Monody.

WELLS is so near to the English Loretto that we may treat ourselves to an excursion thither before pursuing our route along the coast. The railway which connects the town with Dereham, on the line from Norwich to Lynn, will enable us to accomplish our purpose with economy of time, and in a few minutes we alight at Walsingham.

From the station we can see a small rural town lying at the foot of a gentle slope with trees, and a gray wooden spire rising among the roofs all sheltered by much wood, some of which rises into the characteristic rounded masses. So quiet and humble does it appear, that you would never imagine it to have been one of the famous places of Europe: the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, more visited than Becket's tomb, to

which kings and queens, haughty barons and gentle dames, natives and foreigners, journeyed from far to pay their vows, besides crowds of pilgrims of the common sort. Heaven itself regarded the spot with especial favour, so said the devout, and traced the Milky Way in the firmament to mark the Way to Walsingham; while a track, still traceable in places from Newmarket to Brandon and Fakenham, known as the Palmer's Way or Walsingham Green-Way, lay open to those who preferred to look downwards. How many weary hearts have paced hither on weary feet hoping for rest. Have we not an example in the plaintive ballad?

"Gentle herdsman, tell to me
Of courtesy I thee pray,
Unto the town of Walsingham
Which is the right and ready way?

Unto the town of Walsingham
The way is hard for to be gone;
And very crooked are those paths
For you to find out all alone.

Were the miles doubled thrice,
And the way never so ill,
It were not enough for mine offence;
It is so grievous and so ill."

And how many victims of superstition have journeyed hither to be further deluded by the shrewd retailers of absolution and adulterated atonement! How the cowls must have chuckled as their coffers waxed ever fuller with the pilgrims' gifts, fines, and

payments. It must have been amusing to watch their countenances when they saw arrive a company of that other sort described by Piers Plowman—(with a slight alteration of spelling),

"Heremytes on an heep
With hoked staves
Wenten to Walsyngham,
And their wenches after,
Grete lobies and longe
That lothe were to swynke;
Clothed hem in copes,
To ben knowen from othere;
And shopen hem heremytes,
Their ese to have."

Among the famous personages who undertook a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Walsingham we find the learned Erasmus. He came here during the time of his professorship at Cambridge, and as we may believe more out of curiosity than credulity or faith. "It is," he writes, "the most celebrated place throughout all England . . at the extreme coast of England on the north-west, at about three miles distance from the sea. It is a town maintained by scarcely anything else but the number of its visitors." Was it by a slip of the pen that *north-west* was written instead of *north-east?* Readers of the *Colloquies* will remember what the great scholar thought of the "reliques"—of the Virgin's milk which had been brought from Constantinople, when he saw it looking like dry chalk or white of egg; and of the fragments of the cross, so numerous, that if all were laid together "they would load an East India ship;" and his opinion of the learning of

the monks who mistook his Greek inscription for Hebrew.

At the time of the suppression, nineteen articles of inquiry were issued against Walsingham, chiefly concerning the reliques:—"Whether Our Lady hathe doone so many miracles nowe of late as it was said she did when there was more offering made unto her?" —"Whether our Ladye's milke be liquid or no," and whether the former sexton could not testify that he had renewed the milk when it was like to be dried up.

But let us descend to the town. Dulness of course prevails. The first sign of antiquity is on the right in the main street—a fine Perpendicular gate-house of black flint that looks as venerable with dust as with years. It has two empty niches above, and a small quatrefoil window, from which a curious stone head looks forth, representing, as is said, the vigilance of the porter. It was formerly the west gate of the Priory, and is now a sort of back way to a very pleasant domain. Adjoining it is an old post and panel-fronted house, but too unimportant to disturb the attention of those whose study of the gate is animated by its having been the scene of a miracle. According to the county historian the wicket was "not past an elne hye, and three-quarters in bredth. And a certain Norfolk knight, Sir Raaf Boutetourt, armed *cap-à-pee*, and on horseback, being in days of old, 1314, pursued by a cruel enemy, and in the utmost danger of being taken, made full speed for this gate, and, invoking this lady for his deliverance, he immediately found himself and his horse within the close and sanctuary of the Priory, in a safe asylum, and so foiled his enemy."

The proof of the miracle was a brass of the knight nailed on the gate. Erasmus saw it and mentions that his "reverend guide" related the miracle to him. Whereupon Menedemus inquires, "And did he make you swallow such a wonderful story?" Is there anything in modern priestcraft which the learned colloquist would be unable to swallow could he re-visit the places that knew him four hundred years ago?

Wishing to record the name of the street, I asked it of a passing boy. He looked at me apparently in extreme surprise, and answered, "A did n't knaw as there wuz any name for 't." Is Walsingham then so very primitive?

Where the street emerges upon the Common Place —a rustic square—stands a dome-shaped relic, the old conduit. The style is Perpendicular, with niches and arcades, and on the top a stump of the shaft of a cross. But the niches and arcades have been bricked up. A wooden door hides the interior, and it seems that pains have been taken to make the structure look as much as possible like a pump, or correspondent to the name of its site.

The tall trees which overtop the houses serving me as guide, I walked to the edge of Mr Warner's park-like grounds, and presently saw beyond the lake a tall arch on a smooth lawn surrounded by magnificent trees. I crossed the bridge to get a nearer view, but was prevented by walls and fences. However, a gentleman coming from the house kindly pointed to a door in the wall, and told me I might enter there. It admitted me to a shrubbery, in which fragments of an old refectory, a stone pulpit, and scraps of masonry

and sculpture are preserved. And thence I passed to the lawn, where, with a panelled stair-turret on each side, and sixty feet in height, the east window of the ancient Priory still exhibits its graceful proportions, heightened by the acacias, cedars, and elders that grow between it and the large timber trees. As old records tell there was once a little chapel built here after the manner of the Santa Casa at Nazareth, and when Geoffrey de Favarches set out for Jerusalem, about 1150, he granted to God and St Mary the chapel, which had been built by his mother; and out of that grant arose the Priory of which this east window is a not ungraceful memorial. And while the two 'wishing-wells' remain in the grounds the traditions of the pilgrims will not be forgotten. You can look into the two circular openings and see the water. Close by is a square bath and an Early English doorway. The feeder of the wells was, as Erasmus relates, a spring "sacred to the Holy Virgin. The water," he adds, "is wonderfully cold and efficacious in curing the pains of the head and stomach."

After all, the chief glory of Walsingham was the chapel of the Annunciation, a poor little wooden structure said to have been brought miraculously from a distance and dropped down so as to cover the two wells. It contained the celebrated image, the object of all the vows, and is described by writers of the time as "full of wonders."

The pilgrimages began, as is supposed, before the end of the twelfth century. The list of royal personages who came to this remote village includes Henry III., Edward I. and II., and Henry VII. and VIII.,

David Bruce, King of Scotland, with twenty knights, under a safe-conduct from the Wardens of the Marches, granted by order of Edward III.; and Queen Catherine, who, writing to her consort after the victory of Flodden, says, "I now goo to our Lady at Walsingham that I promised soo long agoo to see."

Sir John Paston in one of his letters writes, "I herde yist'daye that a Worsted man off Norffolke that solde worstedys . . seyde that my Lord of Norffolke and my Laddy wer on pylgrymage at Our Lady on ffoot." And in another place, he begs his brother to get "a lytell clokke" from a monk of Walsingham who had it to clean. "I thank yow as hertyly as I kan . . and specially for that yé do so moche for Oure Ladyes Hous of Walsyngh'm," writes one of his cousins.

Henry VII., during the journey which he took for confirmation of his authority when in fear of plots and rebellions, came hither. As Bacon narrates, "from St Edmund's-bury he went to Norwich, where he kept his Christmas. And from thence he went, in a manner of pilgrimage, to Walsingham, where he visited our Ladyes Church, famous for miracles, and made his prayers and vowes for helpe and deliverance." And after the battle in which Lambert Simnel was taken prisoner, "the King went to Lincolne, where he caused supplications and thanksgivings to be made for his deliverance and victory. And that his devotions might goe round in circle, he sent his banner to be offered to our Lady of Walsingham; where before he made his vows." He gave besides an "ymage of

silver and gilt . . to be offered and sette before our Lady."

Henry VIII., enacting the part of a true pilgrim, walked hither barefoot from Barsham, a village about two miles distant. If the roads of Norfolk were then as full of sharp gravel as they are now the walk must have been very much like a penance. Did his Majesty lodge at Barsham Hall, a much decorated mansion of brick, of which a ruinous fragment still remains? He hung a chain of gold, some say a diamond necklace, round Our Lady's neck, accompanying the gift, no doubt, with vows and prayers. A debating society, fond of discussing unresolvable questions, might discuss whether this visit and what the King then saw had any influence on his after-conduct —whether the recollection of his then exemplary weakness exalted the severity of his subsequent onslaught upon the church. In any case, it is on record that the image to which the monarch had paid such valuable homage was burnt at Chelsea by his functionaries.

On my return to the town I wanted to get a peep at the inside of the church through the windows. The font, with panels representing the seven sacraments, is described as a marvel of sculpture. But the church-yard gate was locked, and being further guarded above by a *chevaux de frise*, my usual alternative of climbing over could not be put in practice. Is it that Walsingham has come to dislike pilgrims, or that the church is still very much afraid?

At the other end of the town, not far from the station, there are the ruins of a house of Gray Friars

situate on ground which is half pasture, half orchard, showing at one end a solid eastern gable, at the other a garden inclosed by arcaded walls which appear to have formed part of the cloisters; and all the rest is built up with a cottage, and encumbered with stables, cattle-stalls, sheds, and pig-styes. I walked round more than once searching for touches of beauty, and could find them only where a few noble plane-trees overshadow an angle of the old ivy-fringed wall.

While looking back upon the town from the station, we may imagine the painful emotions with which a simple-minded believer would view the first signs of ruin—of progress towards the picturesqueness which affords to us of the present day so much pleasure. His heart was deeply touched who wrote,—

"Bitter, bitter, oh, to behoulde
The grasse to growe
Where the walles of Walsingam
So stately did shewe.

"Oules doe scrike where the sweetest himnes
Lately wear songe,
Toades and serpents hold their dennes
Where the palmers did throng."

In later days the name was kept alive by a noble family, one of whom—Sir Francis Walsingham—had been Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State.

Another half-hour on the railway, passing Fakenham, where flows the pleasant Wensum, and where on a neighbouring hill the sheriff's court for the whole county used to be held; and we come to Dereham: a town in the heart of the county, the so-called garden

of Norfolk. Here Bonner of accursed memory was once vicar; here Cowper dwelt after his removal from Mundesley, and here he was buried; and here Wollaston was born, the cleverest chemist and natural philosopher of his day.

It is a town of well-to-do aspect, with a large market-place, on one side of which stands "Cowper's house," as it is still called: an old-fashioned dwelling of red brick, with gabled portico, and very plain windows. It was a pleasure to the stricken poet to look out from those windows upon the public way, whose ordinary quiet traffic was animation enough for him. He lingered here from October, 1796, to the end of his strange life: a life of contradictions, alternating between intense melancholy and imperishable poetry.

The square massive bell-tower, "the new clocker," standing apart from the church, has an imposing effect as you descend the slope from the street. It was built in the reign of Henry VII., the church-tower being too weak to carry the bells. The church, of older date, and collegiate in form, is one that intelligent visitors view with especial interest.

Remembering the tradition we stroll first through the church-yard in search of the holy well. It is among the tombs on the western side: a hollow bordered by flowers, between old sunk walls; an old Norman arch at the lower end covering an arcaded recess, within which the bright water flows up to daylight. Though pains are taken to make it look attractive, it has the appearance of being, as described by the inscription, the ruin of the tomb in which King

Anna's daughter was buried. Her life was so angelic, and attended by such miraculous incidents, that a miraculous spring might well burst forth from her sepulchre. Had not two deer ambled into the town every morning as far as the bridge to be milked by her virgins, and so saved them from anxiety about food, until the gentle animals were killed by a rude misbeliever? And did not the slayer thereupon sicken and die of jaundice as a punishment for his sacrilege? And afterwards, when the princess' body was taken from the grave to be entombed in the church, was it not found whole and uncorrupt, and her vestments also? in which state it remained down to the time when King Edgar, having granted Dereham to Ely, the monks of Ely came by night and stole away the holy corpse, thereby accomplishing what the old chronicler describes as "sanctum sacrilegium, fidele furtum, salutaris rapina."

The interior of the chancel was beautified and renovated in 1852: the lath and plaster ceiling that masked the woodwork of the roof were torn down from the aisles; and now with stained glass, decorated work, tall brass candelabra, handsome altar-rail, and other requisites, there is enough of art to stimulate the devotion of phlegmatic worshippers. On my making a remark on the handsome appearance of the altar to the sextoness she answered, "Yes, sir, you see there 's the Commandments, and the table-cloth covered with stars of Bethlehem, all complete. 'T was a lady who gave us that. lectern and chair: they 're very much admired." Then pointing to the door of the rood-loft stair, "That 's where the nuns used to go in. They had a passage

between the walls from another part of the church to this." And presently, while I was looking at the aumbry, "That 's where they used to keep their wine, sir."

If the noble arches which support the lantern attract your attention, fail not to note their effect when viewed from the east end of the chancel. The transept is formed by two side chapels: the one on the south has a groined ceiling set off with bright colour and scroll-work. In the other stands an old coffer beautifully carved and showing a row of statuettes in niches along the front, with a small canopied figure in the centre, curiously fashioned in steel. While examining this latter I found it contrived so as to fall and disclose the key-hole. The sight of such a coffer as that is something to be remembered. It was given to the church "in token of respect" in 1786; and is said to have belonged in early times to the noble family of Howard, and to have formed part of the furniture of Buckenham castle.

Let us approach the north wall of this transept, for there beneath the window, inclosed by a railing, is a tomb, the sight of which will touch our emotions in another kind as we read the inscription: *In Memory of William Cowper, Esq. Born in Hertfordshire,* 1752. *Buried in this Church,* 1800. Above these lines appears a sort of pediment formed by a wreath drooping across a Bible and a Prayer Book, which stand as on a shelf, and below are the verses,—

> "Ye who with warmth the public triumph feel
> Of talents dignified by sacred zeal,

Here to Devotion's Bard devoutly just
Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust!
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his fav'rite name:
Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
So clear a title to Affection's praise:
His highest honours to the heart belong,
His virtues form'd the magic of his song."

In the same inclosure there are tablets to the memory of *Mary Unwin* and *Margaret Perowne*.

Will the day ever come when that poor *Esq.* shall be left out of lapidary inscriptions? If there be a time when such ornament as that is worse than vanity it surely is when the one to whom it is applied has obeyed the summons of the Shadow "who keeps the keys of all the creeds."

As we turn and pace with slow and quiet steps to the door, let us open our heart to the sweet cadence of Mrs Browning's monody.

"It is a place where poets crown'd may feel the heart's decaying;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence languish:
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

"O poets, from a maniac's tongue was pour'd the deathless singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groan'd inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

* * * * * *

"With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,

Who suffer'd once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find
him;

'And wrought within his shatter'd brain such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences:
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refresh'd him like a slumber."

CHAPTER XVII.

Railway Route—Wells—Aspects and Capabilities—A Trade in Fish—Six-and-thirty Public-Houses—Reclamation—The old Maltster—Another Start—Holkham—The Park—The Column—Coke of Norfolk—Transforming a Waste—Improving the Labourers—Inoculating the Land—Holkham Hall—Architecture and Antiques—The smuggled Statue—Lake and Woods—Triumphal Gate—Creake Abbey—Burnham Thorpe—Birthplace of Nelson—The Gardener's Talk—Burnham Overy—The Bell-ringer—Burnham Deepdale—Brancaster—A Walk on the Beach—A Sunset—To Wade or not to Wade—Hark Back—Titchwell—Thornham—Holme—The Light—Hunstanton.

FROM Dereham to Lynn, about five-and-twenty miles, the railway runs through a well-cultivated district; touches Swaffham, a place of some repute as favourable to longevity; crosses another Devil's Dyke near Narborough, where the Spelmans had an estate, and so westwards to the King's port on the Wash. But that way is not yet to be ours, for we must go back to Wells, and journey to Lynn by a less direct route.

Except the church, and you will find but little to admire in Wells or its neighbourhood. One part of the town is traversed by cross alleys with apparently less excuse for want of space than Yarmouth: or does a flat site necessitate huddling for the sake of warmth? Ar-

thur Young found the inhabitants employed in spinning, and "drinking tea twice a day, and many a third time for dinner." Brown swamps and sad marshes bordered by ragged sand-hills spread between it and the distant sea: the port is a tortuous creek deep enough at high tide for vessels of two hundred tons, but at low tide showing more of mud and green slime than water.

I saw it at the ebb, when its alternate aspect could hardly be imagined. But a merchant who left his counting-house to walk with me along the quay took much pains to make me aware of the capabilities of the port. "See what a height our quay wall is," he said, "that will tell you how it looks when the tide 's in. Why, we 're going to hev a regatta here next week," and he gave me a large handbill, in which sailing and rowing matches with a shovel match for finish were announced as "open to all competitors." "Then, you see, we hev oyster-beds and mussel-beds in the shallows at the head of the creek, and we are beginning to do a trade in fish. Look, there 's a boat just come up. I should say they hev as many as twenty-five pair of soles aboard." I expressed my admiration at this encouraging cargo, and made a remark about the appearance of the town, to which the answer was, "Oh, as to that, you see, we hev four thousand inhabitants here, and six-and-thirty public-houses, and our vicar gets £800 a year. Now you 'll understand all about that."

From the lower end of the quay a straight newly-made bank stretches out a mile directly seawards: a work of reclamation accomplished at the cost of the Earl of Leicester. On one side of it a large field of

wheat growing on land that was formerly flooded at every tide testified to the beneficial result. The top of the bank moreover can be used as a walk or drive by the inhabitants, who when at its farther end are still two miles from the sea at low water, so great is the breadth of sand and mud laid bare by the receding tide.

An old maltster, whom I saw standing at a door, invited me in to see the malt-house as something remarkable. "I can wet seventy-five quarter at once," he said, as he showed me the floor. It seemed cruel to tell him I had seen a malt-house at Burton in which a thousand quarters could be wetted at once. But even then the old man was not left comfortless, for he rejoined, "Ah, pretty well all I make goo to Burton."

The morning was bright when I started afresh from Wells, without a companion, for the Vicar, as in the former week, had gone home to attend to his flock. The road runs westwards across a tract of marshy meadows, where cattle and breeding ewes grow fat, if they are not surprised and drowned by a spring tide; and where a low ragged outline far on the right denotes the sandy border of the sea.

About three miles and I came to Holkham, and fancied myself in a model village, for the cottages are clean, the inn looks sober, the hedges are trimmed, and the roads smooth, between belts of lawny grass. In the cottages by the park-gates dwell aged retainers of the estate, from whom you may inquire the way across the broad domain. But turn before you enter and look northwards, for there a segment of blue sea appears at the end of a long straight drive, which descends to Holkham Bay.

Take a pathway running to the right, just within the gates, and it will lead you under stately trees, limes, oaks, and sycamores, to the column. After the treeless marshes, the rustling of the leaves sounded to me unusually pleasant. There are clumps of chestnut, and avenues and groves of beech, from which you emerge on a broad opening, where stands the tall column erected in memory of Thomas William Coke, Earl of Leicester. The reason why is partly told by the bas-reliefs and friezes of the pedestal. In one panel appears a small flock of sheep and lambs, with the epigraph *Small in size bvt great in valve.* Another has a drill; another a bull; and the last a group of tenants about their landlord, and *Live and let live* as the motto. All are characteristic of the improvements effected by him whose name, as 'Coke of Norfolk,' was a familiar word among the last generation. Eastern England is largely indebted to him for the present flourishing condition of its agriculture. His annual sheep-shearings were to the landowners and farmers of his neighbourhood as useful and important in their communication of experimental results and new methods as the great gatherings of Agricultural Societies have since been to other counties. It was here that new implements and appliances were first tried and recommended; that the beneficial effect of spreading marl on the poor sandy surface soil was demonstrated; that Southdowns were introduced in place of the unprofitable native sheep; and that mulberry-trees were shewn trained on a wall, spreading their branches nearly a hundred feet, and yielding abundance of fruit from July to October. At these annual gatherings from

three hundred to six hundred persons—nobles, gentry, farmers, and implement-makers, were entertained at dinner in the 'statue gallery.' One of the standing toasts was, "A fine fleece, and fat carcase." Norfolk may be proud to add to her roll of Worthies the name of a descendant of the Lord Chief Justice who has so long adorned it. ...

When Mr Coke entered into possession of the estate in 1776 the annual rental was £2200. In 1818, the revenue from the fifteen-hundred acres of plantations only was £2700, and from the whole estate £20,000. His farms were let at a moderate rent, on a lease of twenty-one years. He built good farm-houses, fit for a gentleman's residence, on renewal of the leases; and good cottages for his labourers. In the latter particular it is to be wished that other proprietors would imitate him, for East Anglia is not yet by any means a model district generally as regards rustic dwellings. The effect of Mr Coke's improvements is described by Dr Rigby, who visited the estate in 1818. The labourers who had inhabited squalid hovels, and got a precarious living from smuggling and the predatory habits thereby induced, became steady workers upon the farms; their numbers increased; and such was the effect of sufficient work and wages regularly paid, that the workhouse of Holkham and two adjoining parishes was pulled down as a thing that could be dispensed with.

Mr Coke's system of farming was the four-course system, combined with the drill for sowing, and much ploughing and stirring of the soil to keep down weeds; and with this he effected an astonishing transformation.

On land which had been let tithe-free, on a long lease at three shillings an acre, he raised forty-eight bushels of wheat, and nearly eighty bushels of barley to the acre; a fact the more noteworthy as up to that time not an ear of wheat was grown in all the district between Holkham and Lynn. The Northumbrian practice of turnip-growing was introduced; and the irrigation of the water-meadows at Saxham was planned by Smith, "the father of geology." And by adopting the practice devised by one of the tenants of "inoculating the land," that is, spotting it with small pieces of sward, which after a few months grew together and covered the whole surface, many acres of sandy waste were converted into good pasture. But in common with other improvers, Mr Coke was censured and denounced, and vehemently opposed at the county elections, on the ground that his system would "lessen the demand for labour, deprive the poor of employment and the means of subsistence, and demoralize and depopulate the county." Did the authors of those predictions really believe them?

Holkham Hall is a mile or more distant from the column. I walked straight thither, across the grass, enjoying the sight of the elevated wooded background, and of the grand line of trees that sweeps up in a great curve from the east. The mansion, extending with its wings to a length of three hundred and forty feet, resting on a rustic basement, and with a Corinthian portico, has an imposing appearance, and taken with its interior decorations and treasures is hardly to be equalled. The Ionic columns and walls of the great inner hall are of Derbyshire marble, alabaster and

spar; and the statues, carvings, and other specimens of ancient art, the paintings, books, and manuscripts, impart to the inside of the house a beauty and dignity commensurate with the effect produced on the surrounding landscape by planting and cultivation. Among the sculptures is the statue of Diana, which was brought away from Rome in defiance of Papal authority, at the cost to the noble purchaser of an imprisonment, besides the covenanted £1500. All this I had hoped to see; but before I had finished looking at the outside one of a group of servants lounging at a side door told me "it was not a public day." So I could only regret my failure, and take a fresh departure.

The rising of the ground on the west of the house relieves the general levelness, and enables you to get a prospect of the park. Your eye roves with pleasure over a scene which, as an inscription over the entrance of the house sets forth, was an "open barren estate" down to 1734, when the building and planting were begun. Now the broad lawns are well clothed with timber, and the plantations have grown into sounding woods, that shelter the three thousand acres comprised in the estate. On your left appears a lake, with winding shores stretching away past a green islet to the masses of foliage which conceal its farther end; a vista of brightness amid the abounding verdure. And heightening the picturesque effect, the top of a square pinnacled church-tower rises above the trees on the higher slope. The church is dedicated to St Withburga, who, as we read, dwelt here at Holigham, before commencing her saintly life at Dereham.

The nearest way to Burnham is by a track running westwards across the park. Or you may take a longer way southwards, up past Cleopatra's needle through Thoroughfare Clump, and out to the triumphal gate on the Fakenham road, where you will not be far from the ruins of Creake Abbey, should you think a few arches worth the pains of an excursion. Forget not to turn as you ascend the rise, for the elevation affords a good view of the south front of the Hall with its Corinthian portico, and pleasaunce inclosed by a handsome balustrade.

By whichever way you quit the park, you will find something pretty in the descent to Burnham Thorpe: hill and hollow, and much wood, rimmed by the distant sea. You turn into a lane, cross a meadow and a lively brook, and come to the pleasant park-like ground around the rectory. It is a memorable spot, and we will get leave to saunter through. Here, in the old rectory, which was pulled down long ago, was Nelson born. Hereabouts are the scenes of his boyish exploits; his delay by the brook (probably the little stream we have just crossed); his adventure in the snow, and triumph of honour. From this quiet retreat he went forth at the age of twelve years and a half to join the *Raisonnable* at Chatham, and enter on the career which made him Baron Nelson of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe. Did the title recall to his memory his delightful rural birth-place?

I fell in with the gardener, who took pains to make me understand that the pond in the lower part of the grounds was shaped after the *Victory*, and that the Earl of Orford, to whom the estate belongs, had given

a piece of oak from the ship to be carved into a memorial. But it had been put away in the barn, and goodness alone knew when the carving would begin. The old rectory stood on the low ground, near the site of the present coach-house; but no one rightly knew when it was pulled down. Some said seventy years ago; and he had been told that the great lime-tree under which we stood used to shade the front of the house. Nelson the rector and one of his sons were buried in the church.

While dining at the *Lord Nelson*, I inquired whether many visitors came to Burnham. "Not many," answered the hostess, "for when they come they say there's nothing to see." I praised her beer. "'T is Bircham's of Reepham," she said in a confident tone.

I walked on between rolling slopes of corn, descending always to the levels of the coast: through Burnham Overy (over ea, *i. e.* over water), where the sign POLICE looks odd among the roses on a pretty cottage, and where on the front of the west gallery of the church you may read, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." It seemed to me that everything was obeying the precept, for the sun shone with unusual warmth, and the air seemed alive with the glad hum of insects; but intermingled at times with the solemn tone of the bell. A little lass, the sexton's daughter, was tolling. I asked her how she knew when to pull. "We waits till the sound goes away," she answered: "then we pulls again."

There are views of the sea with islets and a sand-spit from the rise above 'Debdle,' which is the local

name for Burnham Deepdale; another prettily embowered village, which has a curious little round-towered church surrounded by trees. Here I re-entered on the main coast road, and, as a rustic said, "had nawthin' to dew, but ta keep right awahy. Ya'll goo through Brancaster," he added, "an' yer no sooner clear o' Brancaster than yer at Titchwell." Was it this part of the county that Piers Plowman had in mind when he wrote—

> "I kan no Frensshe, in faith,
> But of the fertheste ende of Northfolke?"

Brancaster was once Brannodunum, the head-quarters of the *Comes* of the Saxon shore, with his troop of Dalmatian horse. Their camp, a fortified inclosure of eight acres, has been levelled and ploughed, yet still, as is said, presents a traceable outline. Many stones from the old walls were used in building the great malt-house, more than three hundred feet long, which was formerly regarded as one of the wonders of Norfolk and the pride of Brancaster, for nearly five hundred quarters of barley were 'wetted' therein every week during the season.

To vary the scene, I turned into a by-road and crossed the marshes to the beach, winding among mud banks, russet-coloured creeks, and herbage so rank that it reaches the horses' knees as they graze. At times large flocks of starlings flew past, filling the air with the whirr of a thousand wings. A man who had just shot thirteen, told me that it was free shooting in the marshes for all comers, of snipe and ducks as well as starlings. He told me, also, that I should find good

walking along the shore all the way to St Edmund's Point, which loomed dark against the setting sun.

Even in summer the tracks across the marshes have a hollow quaking feel under foot, and awkward pools and patches of mud beset the tidal margin; but this once crossed, you come upon a broad beach of smooth firm sand. The sea at the lowest ebb was so far off that I could hear it murmur only; but the freshness was exhilarating, and I stepped briskly forwards, hoping to reach the distant point before nightfall. Meanwhile the glories of sunset, flushing with richer tints moment by moment, transformed the great arch of the western sky into a realm of ethereal splendour so exquisitely blended and changeful, that the feeling of admiration which it inspired rose almost into awe. It was one of those scenes which Nature vouchsafes to her votaries who go forth into places apart, and there wait upon her with loving and reverent heart. And even to them, of such a scene as this, her manifestations are but few. I felt constrained to stand still and wait with the glory shining on my face until the amber warmed into purple, and the purple yielding its glow subsided into gray.

I resumed my brisk pace, but was presently stopped by a rapid stream that crosses the sand with many a bend. To settle a question that arose in my mind, I threw my boots across and waded through, and went on again, barefoot. The now stony beach began to have an eerie look, for dusk was falling; the distance grew dim and uncertain, and here and there tall beacon-posts and the low-leaning masts of small vessels seemed spectral-like against the cold gray sky. Then

came another stream, broader and deeper than the first, where the question which again occurred was settled by not throwing my boots across. There was not light enough to enable me to see the depth, the bottom of the other had not felt reassuring in the middle, the tract beyond looked wet and muddy, so I turned aside to find a way farther inshore. Much trouble I had before I could discover a way through the slimy edge of the marshes to firm ground, and thence to the road. "'Twas well ye turned back," said a man to whom I spoke, "for if ye'd got through that other water ye'd soon hev bin up to your knees in mud."

As the rustic had said, Titchwell (on the little river *Ti*) seems but a prolongation of Brancaster. Ere long I passed Thornham, a manor on the right, which Henry VIII. gave to his physician Dr Butts, and Sir Edward Coke afterwards purchased: then Holme, or Hullum in native speech, where the epitaph-hunter would find something to reward his scrutiny: a place which reminds us once more of Shropshire, for it was an advowson of Lilleshall Abbey. And so it is wherever we travel in England: places the most widely separated are connected by history as if to combine our reminiscences into one affectionate whole. Then the bright lamp of Hunstanton lighthouse flashed its rays through the gloom and cheered the way until I descended into a deep hollow where a brook that made itself heard could scarcely be seen for overhanging trees. Beyond, a steep ascent leads to the village of Hunstanton, through which I passed, and descending a rough lane, came to the *L'Estrange Arms*; a comfortable inn on the cliff.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Bath—Miles of Shoals—The Wash—Boston Deeps—Roaring Middle—A red Anchorage—The red Chalk—Remarkable geological Phenomenon—The Scald Heads—St Edmund's Landing-place—His Chapel—Roger L'Estrange—Another Walk—Thousands of Shells—Titanic Pudding—The Gravel—Sloppy Sand—Heacham, and other Hams—Snettisham—Dorsetshire upon Norfolk—The Pedder's Way—Ingoldisthorpe—Dersingham—Sugar-stone and Iron-stone—Sandringham—View of Lincolnshire and Boston Stump—A Sleep—Castle Rising—Church and Bede House—The Castle—The Keep—A very primitive Church—A sunken Rising—Reminiscences—The She-wolf and her Successors—Lynn.

BRIGHT sun and sparkling sea tempted me forth early for a bath. At low tide the water is so shallow that you must tramp a long way out for satisfactory immersion, unless you prefer to take the journey on wheels, in which case, a man and horse, towels and machine, are all placed at your service for sixpence.

If you happen to be studying the view when the tides are at the lowest you might fancy the land was gaining on the sea, so far-extending are the black-looking shoals then laid bare. Adventurous visitors then walk out two miles to the oyster sea. Shallowness is however a marked feature along the shores of the Wash, of which St Edmund's Point, whereon we now

stand, forms the eastern horn. The western horn near Wainfleet, on the Lincolnshire side, is sixteen miles distant. I gazed westwards in vain for a sight of land and of Boston tower; but both were hidden by thick haze. To passengers who cross the mouth of the great estuary on a voyage from London to the North the effect of the deep recession of the land is that of being farther out at sea; and in the minds of a large number the memory of Boston Deeps is anything but that of a "reverend and awful pleasure," as old Peter Heylin describes it.

A double floating-light is moored about eight miles off the Point, at the extremity of a shoal within which is a good anchorage, about a mile in length, known as the Roaring Middle. This refuge is indicated to seamen when running in for shelter in dark and foul weather by a simple contrivance. The lighthouse-keeper showed me a pane of red glass a foot in width fixed on the north side of the lantern. The light streams through this, diverges, and falls exactly over the whole length of the Roaring Middle. So that the master of a vessel when once within the line of red light knows that he may let go his anchor with confidence.

Taking the landward view we see that Hunstanton is situate mostly on the inner slope of one of the low broad hills peculiar to the county, which terminates towards the sea with a cliff of chalk, gravel, and mould, and that rusty-looking formation known in Eastern England as red chalk, or clunch.

This red chalk underlies the white chalk of all north-eastern England. It appears at Speeton on the

Yorkshire coast; spreads thence under the base of the wolds; dips below the Humber; reappears at Ferriby and near Louth, and crosses Lincolnshire, but under what conditions is not accurately known. But it crops out near Lynn, and here it is at Hunstanton, on the (geographically speaking) southern side of the Wash, and from this point it may be followed into Essex. The peculiar colour, so say the geologists, is produced by peroxide of iron.

And taking a wider range we see the black 'Scald Heads' of Brancaster, and thence round to where the spire of Snettisham, shooting up from thick woods, indicates to us the direction of our coming walk.

Here, so runs the monkish tradition, St Edmund landed on his arrival from Germany, and built a tower in which he resided for a time and learned the whole Book of Psalms by heart. The Point still bears his name, and in a field near the lighthouse the curious visitor may view a small fragment of a hard chalk building said to have been his chapel.

If as a curious visitor you profess sympathy for the author of *Royalty in Chains* you will stroll down the slope to look at the Hall which long before the days of Charles I. had a Roger L'Estrange for its master. Many traces of the presence of the ancient family are discoverable round about the place; and in the church you may see monuments to their memory. And of all the epitaphs perhaps you will best remember this—

> In Heaven at home, O blessed change!
> Who while I was on earth was strange.

Taking the cliff path at my departure, it led me

past the large brick hotel which stands apart from the village in solitary grandeur, with heavy mullioned windows, tall gabled dormers, and a very lifeless aspect. Perhaps the projected railway from Lynn to Hunstanton will wake it into activity.

Along the base of the cliff are strewn slabs of chalk which have been washed out, and converted into what may be described as huge black bricks. All too soon, the height diminishes; the chalk thins off, fails, and is succeeded by dark red clay. This in turn subsides to the level of the beach.

The change is not agreeable, for the beach is nothing but loose gravel intermixed with tens of thousands of shells of whelks, mussels, and cockles, very tiresome to walk on. The substratum is clay, full of small stones thickly imbedded; and here and there, washed out and hardened by the sun, are slabs which you may imagine to be slices of plum-pudding left from a picnic of the Titans. To check the steady drift of the loose upper stratum to the south, barriers are constructed running out from the bank; but the movement continues, nevertheless, and is perceptible for ten miles, as far as Wolverton creek, where the gravel suddenly ends, and leaves place for a fat alluvium, as we shall by and by see. Though fatiguing to the feet, the gravel is not unpleasing to the eye, and is besides a source of profit, for great quantities are sent in barges across the Wash to Lincolnshire, where it makes excellent paths in places which without it would be impassable.

The tide being low there was nothing to be seen on the right but a vast expanse of brown sloppy sand and

yellow water. On my left the bank cut off the inland view, so after an hour of the loose gravel I struck into the pastures by the rustic lodge where the Squire of Heacham's fishing-parties make merry over their fishy feasts. The Rolfe who sailed with Raleigh and married an Indian princess was of Heacham.

Norfolk is as remarkable for the number of names of places within it terminating in *ham* as for its churches. This corner of the county abounds with instances, all reminding us pleasingly of early Anglo-Saxon villages. A few miles beyond Heacham we come to Snettisham, a place of hill and dale, where the land is as red and the trees are as grand as in Warwickshire, and the village, inclosing a spacious green, has a cheerful look. The church, as is not uncommon in East Anglia, is at some distance, and cannot be seen from the village. I had heard of it on the way as something of which the parish was very proud. Whether or not, it is a fine example of the Decorated style, thoroughly restored, inside and outside, with a grand west front, and tower and spire; the latter shorn of some of its grace by the Whitsuntide gale having carried away its slender apex.

The people, clerk, and sexton were all going home to their dinner as I arrived, and the doors were locked, so I made the most of the outer view. But espying presently a ladder under the chancel wall, I carried it from window to window, and by mounting up got a pretty good view of the handsome interior. The church-yard, abutting on the parsonage garden, and with many trees round about, is a pleasant spot. Was it pleasanter when the *Ham* on the *Snet* belonged to

Archbishop Stigand, whose name we all remember from our school-day reading about the Conquest?

"We like a cold dinner o' Sundays," said the landlady of the public-house; "it makes less work;" and I gladly showed my approval of her economy by sitting down to dine with the family. The landlord, though he had migrated from the south-west twenty-five years before, still retained the pronunciation peculiar to Dorsetshire. His opinion of Norfolk farmers was that they were less stingy to labourers and less given to money-grubbing than those of his native county.

The northern extremity of the Pedder's Way, an ancient Roman road, approaches within about a couple of miles inland of Snettisham. It runs thence in a straight line, inclining south-easterly to Castle Acre, and passes near historic Houghton, whence Sir Robert Walpole wrote so many of his letters.

Ingoldisthorpe is the pretty name of a village a little farther on. Then comes Dersingham, where the houses are built of 'sugar-stone,' a kind of iron-stone, so named because of its rich brown colour. It hardens on exposure, and is used in small blocks, and when set off with dressings of red and white brick has a pleasing appearance. Larger blocks of the same stone are used for walls and fences. Will the inquisitive wayfarer who passes here some years hence see a landscape blackened with smoke, and tall chimneys, and blast furnaces smelting Norfolk iron-stone?

Then the road rises to an elevated region of purple heath and yellow gorse, that rivals the sunshine for brightness; and yet when we looked at it from a

few miles off it seemed a cold black moorland. On the left lies Sandringham—since become a royal residence. In Domesday Book the name appears as Sant Dersingham. The mansion stands in a park of about three hundred acres sheltered by ample plantations. It belonged formerly to the Hon. Spencer Cowper, whose possessions extended to the shores of the Wash.

The haze having cleared off I now saw across the Wash the long low line of the Lincolnshire coast, and beyond it faintly visible the famous tower of Boston, or 'Boston Stump,' as many folk delight to call it. I lay down on a soft heathy hummock in a romantic spot to rest and gaze, and fell asleep in the sunshine.

Cloud and gloom prevailed when I woke, and to warm myself I stepped out quickly for Castle Rising, which is a place to linger at for half a day, if a ruin fraught with many historical associations can touch your sympathies; if an Anglo-Norman church with its round arches, arcades, and zig-zag mouldings in windows and doorways, a gabled tower, and other noteworthy peculiarities, and crosses and monuments, and the smoothest of green lawns with standard roses in front of the parsonage, find you ready to admire and appreciate.

From things ecclesiastical you will perhaps turn to look at the ancient hospital on the opposite side of the road, and at the quaintly-attired old women who dwell therein. They wear high-crowned hats of the florid Welsh style, and long red cloaks with the Howard badge; and here again we are reminded of Shropshire, for this Bede House was founded by the same Earl of

Northampton who built and endowed the hospital for men which we saw at Clun.

A little farther along the road and we cross a meadow to a steep green mound which stands within a deep dry moat. We scramble up and discover that the apparent mound is a mighty bank only, inclosing a great square basin, in the centre of which stands a Norman keep: all that remains of Castle Rising. It has walls nine feet thick; thin flat buttresses after the fashion of other strongholds of the same date; four square turrets; sally-port; stairs, and a hall in fair preservation; and in one part—distinguished by glazed windows—is kept habitable for the keeper. And all about it there grow fringes of grass and clusters of wall-flowers.

Though but little more than a shell there is much in the keep to excite admiration: the ornament on windows and doors, especially the door leading into the great hall, and the combination of strength with ornament, seem suited to a royal abode. The sally-port is midway between the ground and the parapet. In mounting the stairs you pass through an arch at each flight; and in one angle of the walls, marking the place of the garderobe, there are straight chimney-like passages similar to those we saw at Langley. Then in the basement there are cellars, a dungeon, and a well, such as we expect to find in a castle of the olden time.

On the side where the bridge crosses to the warder's tower the ditch is about eighty feet wide, and so deep that you look down on the tops of tall trees and the thorns and elders that crowd it with blossom and

foliage. Among all this the narrow lofty arch appears with picturesque effect.

There is much to repay us also in a closer examination of the fragments around the keep. Among these the most interesting to some visitors is a portion of a chapel sunk below the general level on the north side. The lower courses of the thick rubble wall inclosing the nave still remain, strengthened here and there with red Roman-like bricks; those around the chancel and apse being the highest. In the east end you may see a small round-headed window splayed inside; and at the west end the base of the font. It has been ascertained that the font which stood thereon eight hundred years ago is incorporated with the one now standing in the church we were admiring an hour since. That is Anglo Norman, this Anglo Saxon; so ancient that we can easily suppose it to be the immediate successor of the primitive building in which St Felix preached to his earliest converts. It was in this neighbourhood, so says tradition, that the first Christian church was built in East Anglia. Was it on this same site?

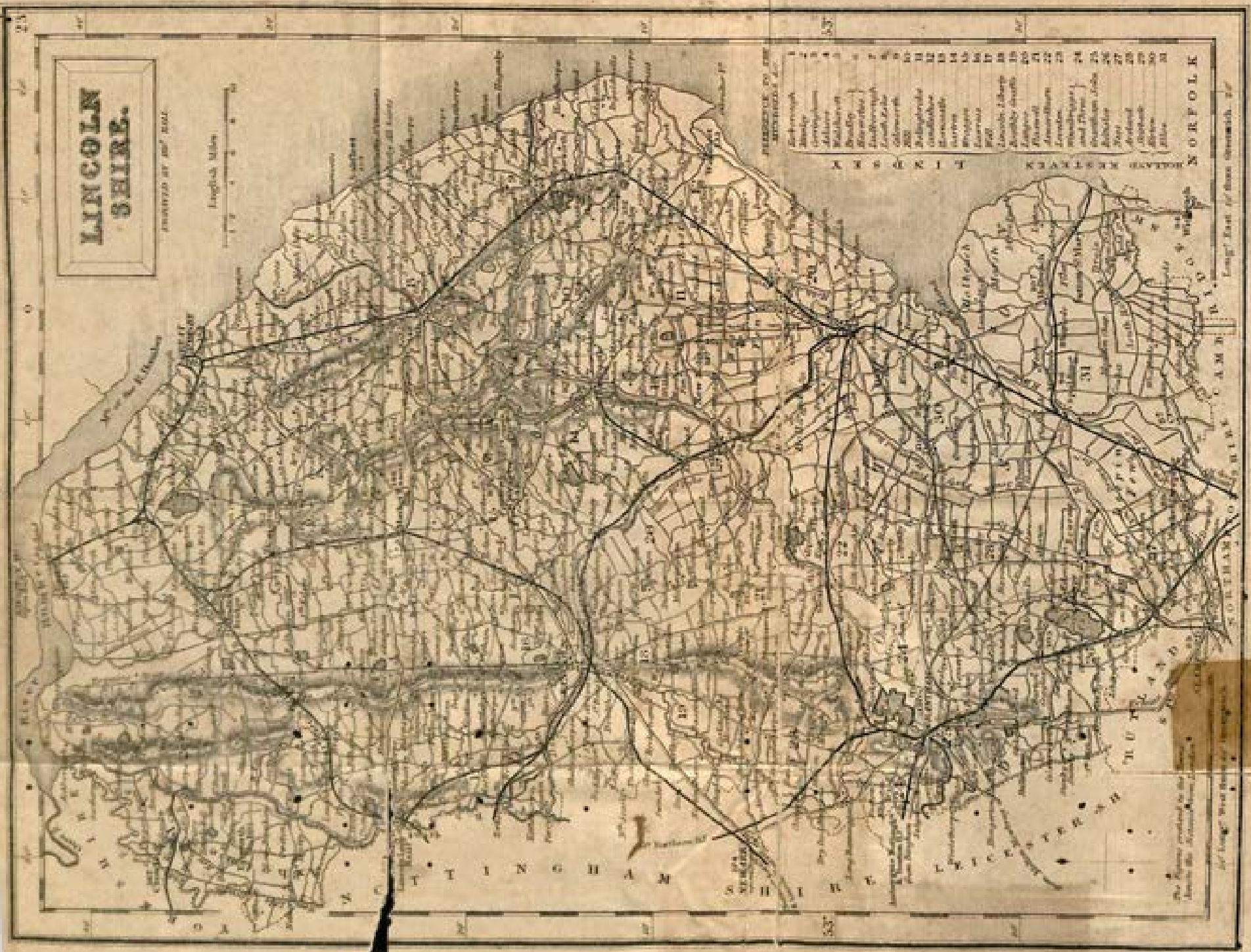
When satisfied with exploration let us reascend to the top of the bank. Seen from this height the town makes but little show. Yet it was once a parliamentary borough with two members. The silver mace and corporation seal are still preserved. It has been abandoned too by the sea, and so in different ways has lost its ancient importance, as the rhyme has it,—

"Rising was a seaport town
When Lynn was but a marsh;
Now Lynn it is a seaport town,
And Rising fares the worse."

By walking round and round the bank we get a view of the country in all directions—a rich landscape for the most part,—of the Wash, and white sails gleaming on its brown expanse of water, and of the great quadrangle with the traces of its inner ballium. With that ruinous keep—the "Rysing Castle" of chroniclers—great names are associated. Built soon after the Conquest it was possessed for two centuries by Albinis and Montalts. In the fourteenth century it was assigned as the residence, some say the prison, of the ill-fated Queen Isabella, the "she-wolf of France." Here she expiated her amour with Mortimer, whose castle we saw at Wigmore. Here she was visited by her son Edward III., accompanied on one occasion by his consort Philippa, and here she died in 1358. Her body was buried in the Gray Friars at Newgate, by that of Mortimer. Afterwards the lordship of Rising fell to the Black Prince, and in the eighth Henry's reign it became a possession of the Howards, who still retain it.

Taking to the road once more I came presently to another rise, whence the towers of Lynn appear about four miles distant. Gradually the undulations are left behind, and we have a repetition of flat landscapes and scattered windmills. As I turned to the right near the ivied church-tower of Gaywood the heavy clouds broke in the west, and out poured a flood of golden light, so that as I finished my walk between level meads, I saw before me a vivid realization of the poet's picture,

> "Pleasantly shone the setting sun
> Over the town of Lynn."


LINCOLN SHIRE.
NORFOLK
LINDSEY
HOLLAND
NOTTINGHAM
SHIRE
LEICESTER
SHIRE
RUTLAND

CHAPTER XIX.

Lynn—Waiter and Slipshoes—Dulness and Antiquities—Invitation to a Tower—Puzzle of Roofs—Dr Burney—Flat Fertility—Water and Mud—Eugene Aram—The South Gate—The Gray Friars—The Mall—Our Lady of the Mount—King John's Cup and Sword—The New Cut—Land conquering Water—A World's End—Head of the Wash—Stakes and Faggots—Busy Labour—The Assistant Engineer—A Muddy Landing—The Bank—A Tussle with the Tide—Hurdles and Clay—Cramatting—Stitching the Straw—The Fascines—Muddy Water its own Repeller—Prolonging the Outfalls—Reclamation and Ague—Benefits and Contingencies—A Warning—A Flood—Dutchmen and Spaniards.

THE long dull street of mean houses by which I entered Lynn neutralized the effect of sunshine, and I came to the *Globe Hotel* in a mood that seemed indifferent to everything except alimentary anticipations. The waiter knew his work, and soon brought up tea and the cold mutton; then pausing at the end of the table, he asked, "Would you like a pair of slipshoes?"

The hotel looks into the Tuesday Market, a large square, where grass growing plentifully between the stones confirms a stranger's impression of dulness. Even in the principal streets, as I noticed during my exploratory stroll before breakfast on the morrow, there is an air of having seen better days; as if the loss of three thou-

sand from the population since 1851 had left visible signs. The town, nevertheless, contains much to interest a visitor: as at Yarmouth, there are a few foreign-looking features; here and there a high-peaked roof; a Town Hall curiously chequered in front with flint and stone; a Custom House that might have been imported bodily from Flanders; besides relics of old religious houses, of domestic architecture, and stubborn ramparts, which embody much of local history, back even to the days of tradition, and to that very early polar expedition undertaken in 1330 by Nicholas of Lynn, who

> "To see those northern climes, with great desire possess'd,
> Himself he thither shipp'd, and skilful in the globe,
> Took every several height with his true astrolobe,"

and who is reported to have gone "as far as the pole itself, where he discovered four indraughts of the ocean, from the four opposite quarters of the world."

Catching sight of an old six-sided red brick tower through the open door of a court-yard I stopped to look thereat, when the owner happening to step forth, accosted me with, "Ah! you are looking at my tower. Perhaps you would like to go to the top of it. Come in. Don't be afraid. There, that's the way up. But stay a minute, I'll fetch you a telescope." So, with telescope in hand, I mounted to the leads, and beheld a strange panoramic view that looked glad, if not beautiful, in the brightness of unclouded sunshine.

The town appears unusually large for sixteen thousand inhabitants; a consequence, perhaps, of the great number of one-story houses. As you look across the queer puzzle of roofs, you see the old Gray Friars'

tower, conspicuous in all views of Lynn, among the trees of a charming recreation-ground. To the right are the pinnacles of St Margaret's, a church with masonry in it of the Red King's days; where Dr Burney, who wrote his *History of Music* while resident in Lynn, was organist; and where stands the largest organ built in England by clever old Snetzler, whose answer to the churchwardens concerning the former organ will bear repetition: "If they would lay out £100 upon it, perhaps it would be worth £50." Farther to the right are the long line of the quay, the harbour with brigs, schooners, smacks, and barges, the broad muddy river, and the broad flat country beyond, sprinkled with poplars and windmills, green with meadows, and yellow in patches with bright blossoming mustard. It is a fertile region, rich in products of the farm and dairy. "Ceres and Bacchus," says Spelman, who was of this corner of Norfolk, "seem to have established their magazines here; so that no place in Great Britain, if in Europe, has such a variety in so small a compass of ground." On the opposite shore appear the church and hamlet of West Lynn, a place that has suffered from the conflict of tides and floods which this neighbourhood has often witnessed. Ben Adam describing it two hundred years ago, writes,—

"'t was populous, but now
Only few houses, what it was once to show.
* * * *
On the northe part on 't now the ruines lye
Of a fayre towne, and you may judge therebye
What once it was, 'fore raging sea did bury
And it devoure, and still devours in fury."

Below the town is the long straight cut through which the Ouse, burdened with the waters of seven counties, flows in a new direct channel to the sea. Seen in the distance its farther end appears as if lost in a great waste of mud, very uninviting in prospect; but, as we may hope to see before the afternoon, very attractive in reality to engineers and economists. No wonder that the county historian describes Lynn as "on a great level, and flat, filthy, rich soil," when from the distant counties of Bedford and Northampton, from Cambridgeshire and all the fen country, the mud finds its way hither, and makes the shallow Wash shallower. On that waste of mud works are in progress which may some day accomplish the ambitious scheme of conquering a new county from the sea.

But let us perambulate. St Margaret's would detain us a long time, but we will remark here only the circular east window, which is filled with Perpendicular tracery, and the ugly building adjoining, used as a meat market, on the site of an ancient chapel, in which the school was held wherein day by day amid young and innocent boys

> "The usher sat apart from all
> A melancholy man,"

dreading the terrible hour which afterwards came, when

> "Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,
> Through the cold and heavy mist;
> And Eugene Aram walk'd between,
> With gyves upon his wrist."

The South Gate at the end of London Road, a solid

structure of brick of the fifteenth century, marks the extent of ground once inclosed by the town walls. It forms a spacious arch flanked by turrets, but is not the original gate built in the days of King John, who had an affection for the town of Lynn. From this we walk to the Gray Friars' tower, which on a near view appears to be also a gateway, for all that remains is an isolated mass of brick and stone, pierced by a tall pointed arch, strongly buttressed, and gabled, from which rises the lofty lantern with graceful effect. Passing on we enter the Mall, and are made aware, by agreeable experience, that Lynn possesses a public ground, which, for tasteful laying out, for smooth green lawns, gravelled walks, charming avenues of noble trees, and vistas of gleaming water, may compare with the beautiful and time-honoured precincts of Oxford and Cambridge. And here is a further attraction, the Chapel of Our Lady on the Mount, a small octagonal building of brick and stone, with buttresses at the angles, which may be likened to a plain and somewhat rude casket of precious jewels. The interior comprises two stories, the lower being a crypt, the upper a chapel less than twenty feet in length, but which, with its slender columns, groins, fan tracery, niches and quatrefoil windows, was manifestly a labour of love to the architect of the fifteenth century. Pilgrims used to pray there on their way to Walsingham; and we, who are pilgrims of a different sort, may find a quiet pleasure in tarrying to admire the cunning handiwork of sculptor and mason after a stroll about the grounds.

A letter of introduction to the Mayor procured me a sight of a memorial on which the town sets great

store—King John's Cup; so called because of the tradition that it was a gift from the land-lacking monarch to the Corporation. But antiquaries assign it to a subsequent time, Edward III., judging from the style of ornament; and considering that it has been repaired on four several occasions, as is recorded on the foot, who shall decide how much remains of the original? Nevertheless, it is a handsome cup, silver gilt, somewhat bell-shaped, with a cover, and appropriate ornaments representing incidents of the chase and jovial cheer. I was allowed to examine and discuss the relic as much as I pleased, and the favour was enhanced by the very courteous manner in which it was conferred.

Another memorial of those early days — King John's sword, and two of the four silver gilt maces which are among the insignia of the Corporation, were shown to me at the gaol. "To see two is as good as seeing four, for they are all alike," said the keeper as he placed them before me on the table. The sword, a long straight-bladed weapon, has a Latin inscription engraved on one side of the hilt, purporting that John took it from his side and gave it to the town. But there appears to be as good reason for doubting the monarch's participation therewith, as with the cup.

Lynn has yet another relic, which however I did not see: the 'Red Book,' said to be the oldest paper book in existence. It contains one hundred and fifty leaves, with entries of wills and other municipal documents, among which the earliest in date is 1309.

In an interval of the sight-seeing above described, I crossed the river by the ferry, and walked down the left bank of the new channel in search of a captain of

Industry, as Thomas Carlyle would call him. The width of the cut is four hundred feet, between straight and level banks on which rough grass had already nearly hidden the rough bare surface. At about two miles down, I began to see signs of the struggle going on between land and water. Here the cut ended, the level suddenly dropped, and from this break onwards the banks showed as broken lines only, gradually thinning off and disappearing in the distance, as if water had there the mastery. But the frail-looking lines will grow into solid ground and extend the present banks a mile farther down the estuary, and the broad slimy shallows behind them will be converted into dry land. Tide after tide will deposit silt and raise the level and impart such fertility as is demonstrated by the neighbouring fields, which produce wonderful crops of beans, and "sixteen coomb" of wheat—that is, sixty-four bushels—to the acre.

In my rambles I have come to more than one place called the World's End; and this seemed to be another. Before me stretched the estuary broadening into the Wash, the water along the margin scarcely to be distinguished in colour from the pale muddy shores. Beneath the bank and spreading away to the left lies the low region known as Marshland, which we shall have to cross when pursuing our travel beyond the Ouse. Round about the ground was all rough and broken: amid the chaos stood a small rude public-house, and scattered on the bank were wheelbarrows, and other implements, stakes and faggots; all waiting apparently for hands to use them.

But on the opposite shore the scene was busy as an

ant-hill. There hundreds of men were working with spade and mattock, raising a great inclosure bank, and trucks were drawn to and fro on tramways, and foot by foot the water was pushed back.

I inquired at the public-house for Mr Olanda, the assistant-engineer. The man looked forth, and pointed him out to me as he came trudging up the sodden ridge of the unfinished bank from an inspection of a weak place. The boat was on his side; so I watched and waited till he came across, and then my waiting was recompensed by his prompt and practical response to the letter from Sir John Rennie which I placed in his hands. We were soon on the opposite bank, which looked so much like mud that I hesitated to step from the boat, not having wading-boots on, as some of the others had; but I was advised that by stepping quickly from place to place I should "do pretty well:" which meant mire up to the ankles only.

To me the scene around our landing-place was very strange by its combination of circumstances. Hurry seemed to be the prevailing influence. Gangs of labourers were heaping up and shaping a long broad sandy mound; some wading up to their knees in tenacious mud; others distributing bundles of straw from a large stack; others carrying bundles of faggots and stakes, and some tying the bundles end to end till they formed a long cable-like length of fifty feet or more. Eight or ten such lengths lashed side by side, and made up to a foot or more in thickness, form a 'cradle,' as engineers call it, which is used to repair breaches in a bank. Floated like a raft to the broken place, it is there laden with clay, chalk, or other

material—sods being the best, and sunk to the bottom of the gap. More of the same material is then thrown in, and in time the bank lifts its head once more above water. The white and weak-looking spots that showed here and there in the lower mile of the line of banks were breaches which had been closed by cradles.

After a little observation, heedful the while of Mr Olanda's comprehensive explanations, I began to get a notion of what was going on. Diverging from the river bank, this new work, resembling a railway embankment, crosses the old channel of the Ouse, and when complete by junction with the shelter bank thrown out from the eastern shore of the estuary, will be about three miles in length, and inclose three thousand acres. No unimportant instalment this towards the new county. But at the time of my visit the greater part of the three miles had yet to be made. Looking from the end of the bank, I saw only vast breadths of mud, and the old crooked river-bed, down which, the tide being low, a quick shallow stream was running. At high water, nearly the whole area would be again covered, again to be laid bare, and in this rise and fall of the tide the engineers find a formidable difficulty. Indeed, to construct a bank across a tideway is always a critical engineering problem. For the extremity of the bank, advanced continually by the 'tipping' of earth-laden railway trucks, is exposed to the scour of the ebb current, which at times will wash away in a few hours the work of weeks. Different means were tried to prevent this mischief, but none succeeded, until a Dutch engineer, whose services had been engaged, introduced the method

practised in Holland, which was to protect the end of the bank with hurdles and a thick layer of clay. The water slips over this, and does not eat its way in as into loose earth or gravel; and as the tipping goes on the clay is dug up and pitched forward, and so repeats its protective function over and over again.

But the tidal enemy has to be repelled from the outer face of the bank as well as from its advancing end, especially in windy weather, when a strong current and heavy swell, if not opposed, would destroy in a few hours the labour of a week. And here again Dutch experience is brought into play, in a process technically described as 'cramatting.' During the time of low water a layer of straw is spread on the newly-made slope, as thatch on the roof of a house, and is quickly fixed by a number of men, who taking an untwisted band of straw thrust the extremity down through the layer about six inches into the sand beneath, with an implement resembling a broad blunt chisel. Then holding the belt loosely they thrust down a second 'stitch' a few inches from the first, then a third, fourth, and so on; taking a fresh handful of straw as fast as the former one is used up. In this way each square yard of the thatch, as we may call it, is held down by sixty-four stitches; and if any one of these portions were lifted and turned upside down, it would resemble a harrow made of straw. As may be supposed, this cramatting goes on rapidly, every man thrusting in stitch after stitch without a moment's pause, so important is it to protect the newly-made slope from the incoming tide. The water rising upon the straw is, except in extraordinary cases, thereby prevented from

sapping the bank; and if the first tide can only be kept from doing mischief, there will be little to fear from its successors. For the thatch is in turn covered with fascines, that is, bundles of brushwood, or faggots, as rustic folk call them, which are kept in place by creosoted stakes driven firmly into the bank, and 'binders' passing from one to the other. And these stakes at the end of six months, when the bank has settled, are driven farther in to tighten the covering layer. By this method of progressive protection, sand and other loose materials, which would be perpetually washed away if left uncovered, may be used in the formation of a bank.

From all this it will be understood that to conquer land from the sea requires no small amount of engineering skill and rude labour, combined with ceaseless vigilance. In all the books that have been written on the subject—and they are numerous—there prevails more or less the idea of danger to be perpetually guarded against. What would become of all the agricultural folk who go to bed every night some feet below the level of high water if the guard were not persistently maintained? Science has done much to improve and simplify the rude practice of former days, and has demonstrated that the nearer the outfall is brought to the sea, the more effectual will be the drainage. Among the schemes originated for reclaiming the fens, one was to carry the outfalls of the four rivers that pour into the Wash between banks down to a place where they should all unite, and flow thence in a stream of such power and magnitude as should scour a deep channel to the sea. It was proposed in the last

century, and was proposed again in connection with the present reclamation; but has not yet been attempted. It would be a noble work; but if, as some geologists suppose, the whole of the Wash is gently rising by reason of some very slow geological movement similar to that now going on in Sweden, future engineers will have a mighty task to keep open the drainage of the great level of the fens.

It is worth remarking that muddy water may be made to contribute towards its own subjection; for every tide as it falls leaves behind the deposited mud, until at last the deposit becomes a barrier. Anything, therefore, which will entangle the mud facilitates the process; and this is especially the case with bundles of brushwood. Every twig retains a coating, the interstices gradually fill up, the bundle becomes a solid mass, through which the water cannot penetrate. Then, if other bundles are laid on, it is obvious that a bank may be built up to the level of the highest tides. In this way the outfalls of some of the streams discharging into the Wash have been prolonged, and much land has been reclaimed in that estuary as well as in the Humber. The protected land gradually loses its slimy brown colour, and assumes "a beautiful whitish surface," as Mr Olanda described it, which he can "discover underfoot though walking over it blindfold." In this condition it is fit for the preliminaries of tillage.

It is also worth remarking that a first consequence of laying bare these broad acres of mud appears to be a harmful one. The owner of the tower from which I had taken my morning outlook, told me that since the commencement of the reclamation works cases of ague had

appeared in Lynn, where for some years previously the disease had been very rarely heard of.

Apart from the interest excited by the scene itself, there was an undercurrent of thought about its effect upon a distant inland region, which imparted a peculiar significance to the whole of the operations. By the cutting of that straight channel the outfall of the Ouse has been lowered twelve feet, whereby some hundreds of thousands of acres in the fen country are better drained than ever before; and districts which could be relieved only by machinery now discharge their superabundant water by a natural outflow; and far back as the borders of Northamptonshire, back to Wisbeach and Ely, the pastures and fields are benefitted by compelling the Ouse to abandon its old channel below Lynn.

At the same time with this benefit an effect was produced on the course of the river above the town: the current was quickened by the low and free outfall; and, as a consequence, the middle of the river-bed was deepened. Sir John Rennie, foreseeing this consequence, warned the conservators of the fen country that unless they took preventive measures, the banks would slip down into the stream because of the deepened bed. At the time here treated of no casualty of the kind predicted had occurred; but the giving way of the Middle Level sluice, the outfall of the Middle Level drainage, and the great flood that followed, in which it seemed as if the flat lands were to revert to their former drowned condition, has since justified the warning in a very memorable way.

After I had trudged hither and thither and sur-

veyed the busy scene to the utmost of my desire, we returned to the boat. The Netherlander, having completed his spell of surveying for the day, pulled off his big boots, and joined us, and so we had profitable talk while rowing leisurely up to Lynn. One question I asked him was, whether his countrymen had grown to like Spaniards?

"As if a Dutchman could ever like a Spaniard!" was his answer.

CHAPTER XX.

Lynn—Gone to the Boat Races—Shovel and Scratch Matches—Marsh-land—"It dew blaw"—Terrington—Gonville, Bentinck, and Prince of Orange—The Saint with the Iron Clothes—Sutton Wash-way—Big Stacks—Sutton Bridge—Rennie's threefold Drainage—Cross Keys Wash—Pedlers at Tea—A Lot for Sale—Sutton St Mary's—Old Roads and New—King John's House—The Landlady and her best of Sea-bathing—Market Day in Sutton—The Roman Bank—Gain of the Land—Holland—Drains, Droves, and Rampires—Lutton Gowts—Miserable Dwellings—Opium Eating—While for Until—The Drove—Drove End—Squatters—Methody and Primitive—Seabank and Salt-marsh—Dreariness—The Bank Shepherd—The Picnic Party—Inquiring for the Sea—The Damsels' Bath—Rustic Fault-finders—Gedney Dyke—Road-mender on Harvest Work—Dutch Aspects—Onions, Chicory, and Woad—Holbeach—A taste of Kentucky—What Cobbett thought of the Fens—Whaplode—Spalding—Nene and Welland—A Dutch Town.

With nearly all its shops shut, Lynn seemed to have gone to sleep when next I walked into it on an afternoon in August; but was only keeping holiday. "Most everybody was at the boat-races," said a woman who helped me to a bottle of ginger-beer, "and some that didn't care about boating took the day for an outing to Castle Rising or Hunston." It was in vain that I sought to renew the acquaintance of the former year: "they're gone to the boat-races," screeched an

ancient dame from an upper window, too timid perhaps to open the door. Hence the change was striking from quiet streets and closed shops, to the life and gaiety that prevailed on the old Bedford river nearly a mile above the town. The bridge, the stream, the banks were thronged by hundreds of spectators, who were entertained with all sorts of rowing-matches, from that of the scientific crew whose oars rose and fell as if by one single impulse, till the boat seemed ready to fly, down to the shovel and scratch matches in which the local malt-shovels do yeomen's service as paddles. I took but a passing look at the scene, and walking on soon ceased to hear the noisy hum of voices and animating shouts.

We have entered on the broad low levels which, with much help from drainage and embankments, form the inner boundary of the Wash. Here, as is said, the old proverb originated which personified the ague as the "bailiff of Marshland," seizing whomsoever he would without mercy. Now the bailiff makes but few captures; the roads are hard, the fields firm and fertile, rich in grass and grain; and where will you see such huge stacks, though long and low, as here? Are the natives afraid that little stacks would blow away? "It dew blaw here uncommon," said a farmer by whose side I paced for half a mile; "there ain't nothin' to stop it, and it come in from the sea like mad." Another local saying, in which warning was given of a flood in the Ouse was, "the bailiff of Bedford is coming;" and among the fenmen the phrase "Whittlesea mere has folded" (foaled) signified such a flood as drove fish plentifully from the mere

into the dykes and rivers. But Whittlesea mere was drained in 1851, and the thousand acres which it comprised are now laid out into farms of remarkable fertility, kept free from water even in the lowest parts by an Appold's pump.

The history of the fens embodies many a narrative of disastrous floods. The rivers crept through the district in very tortuous channels, and the outfalls being neglected, the waters as they approached the sea were thrown back upon the land, so that it had been as described "for the space of many ages a vast and deep fen, affording little benefit to the realm other than fish or fowl, with overmuch harbour to a rude and almost barbarous sort of lazy and beggarly people." The defensive nature of such a region was demonstrated to William the Conqueror by Hereward and his resolute followers; and from that time may be said to date the conviction of the advantage to be derived from drainage. The Romans had shown during their occupation that reclamation was possible. Not however until the reign of James I. was any comprehensive scheme adopted to get rid of the waters, when an act for draining was passed, though not without severe opposition; and Cornelius Vermuyden was invited over from Holland to superintend the work. Some of his measures were beneficial; but he relied too much on artificial channels and neglected the natural outfalls; and to increase his difficulties, the inhabitants of the fens opposed him with brutal violence. Fish and fowl were their subsistence, and if the fens were drained, these would disappear. However, rather than submit to the hated foreigner, they besought the Earl of Bedford, who

owned large estates near Ely, to undertake the drainage. He consented; the 'old Bedford river,' twenty-one miles long, was cut, and the Bedford Level became a local name. As Dyer describes it,

> "Moors, bogs, and weeping fens may learn to smile,
> And leave in dykes their soon-forgotten tears.
> Bedford Level, erst
> A dreary pathless waste, the coughing flock
> Was wont with hairy fleeces to deform;
> And, smiling with her lure of summer flowers,
> The heavy ox, vain-struggling, to ingulph;
> Till one, of that high-honour'd patriot name,
> Russel, arose, who drain'd the rushy fen,
> Confined the waves, bade groves and gardens bloom,
> And through his new creation led the Ouse
> And gentle Camus, silver-winding streams."

Others of the family continued the work; other acts of parliament were obtained, and other companies formed. The Scottish prisoners captured by Cromwell at the battle of Dunbar, and the Dutchmen taken by Blake in his engagements with Van Tromp, were sent into the fens and made to dig and delve, and ultimately the whole region was brought under three systems of drainage: the North Level, Middle Level, and South Level. But not till the elder Rennie was appointed to direct the operations could they be regarded as permanently effectual. By intercepting the flood-waters of the bordering counties; straightening the river channels, and deepening the outfalls, he converted thousands of acres of morass into dry land; and the same principles having been applied since, the great level of the fens, about seventy miles in length, has

become year by year more prosperous and inhabitable.

With this slight sketch in mind we pursue our walk along the level road and come to Terrington, a village that has the comfortable look produced by many good harvests, with a windmill to match; a conical brick tower some sixty feet high, such as you may see by the wayside between Delft and the Hague. Long ago the founder of Gonville College was rector here: lands were reclaimed hereabouts in the last century by Count Bentinck—Dutch William's first Earl of Portland; the big windmill was built in the dear old Dutch style; and the neighbouring farm is still known as Orange Farm, from the Prince of Orange having been entertained there while Holland was in the hands of the French.

Farther on the road crosses a bank built by the Romans. The towns—Walpoles—lying on the left, on the road to Wisbeach, are said to derive their name from *Wall* and *pool:* wall being the bank. St Goderick, once a pedler and afterwards a Romish saint, and who wore out three suits of iron clothes, was a native of Walpole St Andrew's. And although we are not going to Wisbeach, the port of Cambridgeshire, we will give it a passing thought as the birth-place of Thomas Clarkson.

Two hours' walking bring us within sight of the mighty embankment by which straight as a dart the road crosses the hollow and treacherous tract of Sutton Wash-way. Here the view being unobstructed we can see for miles around a prospect which will prepare us for the landscapes in the fens: leagues of spongy

pasturage intersected by drains and level banks. We can survey as from a hill; for the embankment in the middle of the Wash-way is forty feet in height. It was begun in 1825, and has facilitated the reclamation of fifteen thousand acres. The Smeeth, as it is called locally, and the fen of this district were formerly the common of the seven towns of Marshland, whose poor inhabitants grumbled sorely when the reclamation deprived them of reeds and wild-fowl.

Before this road was made the passage of the washes was at times, especially after a 'fresh,' very dangerous without a guide; and tables were published to make known at what hours the tide would serve for the crossing. Even then accidents would happen. Horses would sink in the soft ground and stick fast, and if they could not be released by the usual practice of tramping round and round them at a few feet distance to force them up by a counter-pressure, they were left to drown.

Near the middle we look down on a large pool that has a saltish smell as of a recent tide, and on a farmstead, where stacks rival the house in bigness, and the cattle-yard is inclosed by a semi-circular shed built of the coarse flags and sedge cut from the drains, which give the place a strange and ragged appearance. It seems that last season's harvest of that ragged stuff was bountiful, for one of the big stacks contains nothing else.

Sutton Bridge, so long seen at the end of the straight line, is reached at last: it is a settlement which shows signs of growing into a small town. And here we cross the Nene and enter Lincolnshire.

The bridge opens for the passage of vessels bound to Wisbeach, and is about to be spanned by the railway that will some day connect Lynn with Spalding. Below the bridge the river has all the appearance of a canal, flowing straight between high banks to the Wash: one of the great drainage works by which the navigation and the bordering lands have been alike improved. The low level traversed by the stream is Cross Keys Wash: a walk of three miles along the bank would bring us to the sea-wall which keeps out the tides.

A little farther, and on a grassy patch by the wayside I came upon a party of pedlers, who having unhooked their horses from the house on wheels, had turned them loose to graze, and were lounging on the grass taking their tea. The fire crackled briskly, the kettle sang, and the cups and saucers and tin plates and pans made such a display spread out on the sward, and the four were so busily eating and drinking, that I stopped and congratulated them on their comfort. "Comfort you calls it, do ye?" said one of the men. "I calls it by another name. I'd be glad to sell ye the lot, now, for thirty pound: horses, house, tackle, and everything."

I shook my head, and ventured to express an opinion that the lot was too dear, considering the look of the cattle.

"Too dear, d' ye call it? Look here, I'll chuck ye this here woman into the bargain," and he pointed to a brown-faced, pock-marked, sandy-haired female who sat by the teapot.

I promised to take the lumping offer into con-

sideration, and give my answer the next time I passed that way.

It was dusk when I came to Sutton St Mary's, thirteen miles from Lynn. Trusting to appearances in the dim light I entered the *Woolpack*, and found good entertainment, and guests in the bar-parlour who were willing to talk. If their remarks may be trusted, this fenny corner of Lincolnshire produces a roughish class of natives. Some of the incidents they described savoured more of what one expects to find in uncivilized countries than of an English county. One thing is certain, opium-eating for medicinal purposes prevails largely in the fens.

In a country where thousands of acres are below the level of the sea, and the maintenance of land depends on a ceaseless contest with water, one would hardly look for the ordinary breed. The banks which cross all the landscapes with dark lines, straight or curved, are the only roads, now for the most part hard roads; but twenty and even ten years ago these were sludgy tracks. Some of the guests remembered the time when the ruts were "just the same as ditches, deeper than wagon wheels, and the wheels did n't turn round, they only slid along on the hub," that is, the nave. A small proprietor could not afford to spend money in road-making, and so got out of the difficulty by harnessing eight or ten horses to a laden wagon which two could draw when they came to the hard road. And in wet weather or during a thaw, no one could ride or walk along the banks without a thick bespattering from head to foot. Hence the byeways were shunned as much as possible, and

hence the tardy civilization of dwellers in out-lying places.

I inquired about King John's house, curious to know whether any trace remained of the monarch's resting-place, or of his traditionary escape from drowning. Oh, yes, they all knew it; and some had been "at it" not long before: an old-fashioned abode, occupied by one farmer Mumby, built about a hundred years ago, on the site of the house in which the King was said to have tarried after losing all his baggage while crossing the treacherous sands of the Wash from Norfolk to Lincolnshire. He was surprised by the tide and had to ride for his life.

"I 'll tell thee, Hubert," says Philip Faulconbridge in the play,

> —"half my power this night,
> Passing these flats, are taken by the tide,
> These Lincoln washes have devour'd them;
> Myself, well mounted, hardly have escaped."

While we were talking the landlady came in fresh and blithe from a picnic party, and presently began to tell her day's adventures; whereby I became informed of the way in which the people hereabouts gratify their instinct for sea-bathing. They crowd themselves into one of their big wagons, with provisions in plenty, and fodder for the horses, and journey slowly down to the marshy shores of the Wash, where, halting on the inner side of the sea-wall, they disport themselves after their manner. The party in question had spent the day at Drove End. A queer place it must be, I thought, with such a name as that,

and I expressed a desire to go and see it. "Well, sir," answered the hostess, "I can't say much for it. There's too much mud, and too little water; but it's the best we've got, and so we go there."

The next morning, looking from the window into the drizzly street, I saw one tradesman screw up a bedstead before his door, another put out four chairs, another exhibit three tubs, while seven other men lounged looking on at a corner. "Three women and a goose make a market," according to the old saying; and here, three men and eight wooden things were initiating market-day. Seeing no further signs of business, I started for Drove End. In a few minutes I came upon the bank which the Romans threw up when they first reclaimed the half-drowned lands of the Coritani. It extends from the Nene to the Witham, and is used as a turnpike-road for a dozen miles or more, and looks solid enough to last a thousand years longer. It was the outermost bank in the days of the Romans, and for centuries afterwards. Now there are two banks beyond it, nearly a mile apart, inclosing an area of about sixty square miles, so much has the land gained upon the sea within the period. With increase of breadth, a remarkable increase in height takes place, so that in walking directly hence to the sea you would ascend a gradual slope, and find the base of the outer bank at an elevation above the crown of this Roman bank. Civil engineers tell us that of these English Netherlands there are more than five hundred thousand acres below the level of the sea from four to sixteen feet, the lowest being farthest from the shore, at the base of the uplands which there descend from

the inner counties. The land-fall is thus the wrong way, and as the Wash becomes every day shallower, the increasing difficulty of drainage will be obvious. Left to themselves, the rivers would flood the country for hundreds of miles before their wandering currents could creep through the natural barrier to the sea.

Etymology apart, the district is well-named Holland. Look at it on the Ordnance map, and you will see what a dead flat prevails from Lynn to Boston, and from the sea to Stamford. It resembles a very irregular chess-board, with lines innumerable marking the place of drains and water-channels of all dimensions, some distinguished by the prefix *Eau*, as Eau Brink, near Lynn. This prefix the fen-folk always pronounce as *ea* or *ee*, which is pure Anglo-Saxon for water. Other lines represent droves and delphs, from two feet in width to one hundred, and the artificial banks, ramparts, or 'rampires' as the natives call them, which may be regarded as the hill-ranges of the country. By the draining of Holland fen, nearly a hundred years ago, twenty-two thousand acres were reclaimed, and made available for pasturage or tillage, and the rental, which had been £3600, rose to £25,300 annually.

Between hedges plentifully adorned with white convolvulus the Roman bank leads us to Lutton gowts, where we cross very deep drains in which the stream is bordered by blossoming elders, reeds, and much rank grass. Gowts, pronounced *gotes*, is the old Anglo-Saxon word for sluices; a word probably related to the Norman *égouts*. This little place is an out-lier of Sutton village, which, distinguished by a spire, appears

on the left. Having passed the orchards and gardens, we come to an open prospect across miles of fields, tufty pastures, acres of turnips and beans; all looking delightfully fresh and green after the rain. Here and there a few straggling oaks seem somewhat out of place, in contrast with the rows of willows and poplars, and now and then a tall ash, which flourish vigorously.

The wayside cottages look so much like poor thatched hovels, that you will perhaps pity the tenants, and wonder how they contrive to live under such a miserable shelter. There they stand below the level of the road, abutting on the bank as if for support; relics of the days when peasants were worse lodged than pigs are now. The promoters of improved dwellings for rural labourers will find plenty to do in Lincolnshire notwithstanding that the little gardens are crowded with onions, scarlet-runners, and potatoes.

In some particulars we may believe there has not been much change for the better, since *The Inundation, or the Life of a Fenman*, was published in 1771 by a Fen Parson; for after describing the banks which repel the floods, he says,—"On these banks the inhabitants, for their better security, erect their miserable dwellings, at a great distance sometimes from each other, and very remote from their parish churches, to which they rarely resort, unless to a wedding, a christening, or a burying. So that they seem to be cut off from the community, and are deprived of almost every advantage of social life. It is a rare thing to meet with a village of twenty houses together, unless in their towns, from which they are many miles distant. They

are, therefore, excluded every opportunity of the very lowest education, and few of them arrive at a higher erudition than to be able to read and write."

Then breaking into rhyme he pictures the fenman and his abode, thus—

"His little hut which by the bankside stood,
Cover'd with coat of sedge, the walls of mud,
Where each domestic use one room supplies,
His victuals here he dresses, here he lies:
A little lattice to let in the day,
With half-extinguish'd light and glimm'ring ray.

* * * *

"The moory soil, the wat'ry atmosphere,
With damp unhealthy moisture chills the air.
Thick, stinking fogs, and noxious vapours fall,
Agues and coughs are epidemical;
Hence ev'ry face presented to our view
Looks of a pallid or a sallow hue."

No wonder that when opium became known as the antidote to the effects of the noxious vapours, the fen-dwellers "took to it kindly," as they phrase it. And now opium-chewing has become a habit as well as necessity; and if you could stand in a druggist's shop in the fens on a market-day, you would see many a farmer's wife and many a rustic labourer enter, and lay down their pence for a small packet of opium.

"Keep on theer," answered an old man, looking up from his digging; "keep on theer, while ye come to Black Barn. Yes, thankee, I ain't seen a bad tatur yet to year, and I be glad on't, 'ouse atin diseased taturs makes people badly:" treating me to a touch of

native dialect. You may know a Lincolnshire man anywhere by his using the word *while* for *until*.

Turning to the right at Black Barn, I came upon the drove; a great bank running straight to the east, covered by a broad road between ditches and hedgerows. For a mile or so the road is hard, then gradually changes to coarse heavy sand, as if to show us a specimen of lowland roads as they used to be. So rough is the surface, so deep and loose are the ruts, that you can easily imagine the sludgy bottom of the ditches well represents the state of the road as it appears in wet weather.

A mile of trudging brought me to Drove End: a colony of squatters. When the navvies who made the drove had completed their task, a number of them built rude cots and cabins within the shelter of the sea-wall, and so founded the village of Drove End. Many of the primitive dwellings and not a few hovels still remain, fronted or flanked by gardens, standing on three sides of a space which, made up of banks and drains, answers the purpose of a village green. One decent house, rising in contrast with the others, may perhaps serve as a model to improving villagers; and two public-houses and two chapels invite the wayfarer and the worshipper. But the 'Methody' chapel has been closed for a year; a sign probably that the 'Primitive' preaching is most to the Drove-enders' liking. At the distance of a mile "down in the marshes" there is a government school; and not far from it a church, built by Mr Edward Cardwell. So the villagers may partake of moral and spiritual instruction if they will.

A cross bank affords access to the sea-wall, whence, looking eastwards, you see a large brown expanse of salt-marsh, lying, as it seems, within a low semicircular rim, which curves round it on the edge of the horizon, broken by a few far-distant masts. If this is "the best we've got," I thought, recalling the landlady's words of the previous evening, what can the worst be? The only signs of water were a few shallow muddy pools, formed here and there by an expansion of the pale slimy creeks that cross the great level with many a bend, and diffuse an odour of saline mud. These are filled at high water, and as you may see by the numbers of tiny crabs left bleaching on the herbage, the whole ground is at times covered by the tide. But at low water the scene is one that shows how simple and monotonous are the elements with which Nature contents herself while aiding Art in conquering landscapes from the water. The foot of the slope is enlivened by patches of purple, gray, and feathery white, where grow the marsh samphire, the sea-purslane, and odoriferous wormwood; and the expanse, coloured in places as with bronze, is dotted with sheep, over which the lonely 'bank-shepherd' keeps a vigilant eye, for when the tide is coming in the slopes of the bank itself are their proper grazing-place.

"Do you think we shall see the sea to-day?" said an elderly matron whom I met while sauntering on the bank. She had come with a party of young men and maidens, in one of the huge country wagons, which painted bright red and well laden with hampers, shawls, and umbrellas, stood drawn up on the narrow space between the foot of the inner slope and the ditch;

all hoping for a sight of ripples if not of waves. She sighed at my answer that the creeks would perhaps be full six hours later, and gazed wistfully after the young folk, who, eager for a view of salt water, were picking their way across the spongy marsh to discover what lay beyond. Unlucky pleasure-seekers! the tide was at its lowest, and there was nothing to be seen but leagues of brown wet sand and a margin of slime. Two of the damsels, less adventurous than the others, were taking a foot-bath in one of the pools, from which they could only retreat by wading half way to their knees through a belt of yellow mud. "It's the best we've got, sir."

After a tramp across the marsh and a feast of scent from handfuls of wormwood, I quieted my appetite with bread, cheese, and beer at the *New Inn:* all poor in quality, as was to be expected. A party of harvest-men sat quenching their thirst, and criticising their employers. "I say let's stick up for more wages while all the cawn's cut," said one. Another: "What do they mean by seven and sixpence a acre, and no beer? Bless'd if the farmers here ain't the stingiest I ever heerd tell on. 'T was bad enough to cut off the sup-paw; 't is a good deal wus to cut off the beer." "What can ye expect from young 'uns?" broke in a third; "they 'll knaw bettaw when they'm oldaw." "Then I wish they wuz older now," retorted the former. "Blow the beer," cried another, "I'd ruther have money. I've sin men as 'll never drink a drop, and they wuz n't afear'd of their work nuther."

I made a remark about the state of the road, to which the landlord answered: "You should ha' sin it years agoo. Why, I remember seein' seven or eight

horses put to draw a load (twenty sacks) o' wheat, strainin' the wagon like the mischief all the time. Now ye 'll see three horses draw fifteen quarter. Ah! 't was a great thing for this country when the roads was bettered ten year agoo."

"Thus much of Padua," says Tom Coryat, on taking his departure; and, borrowing his phrase, I say—Thus much of Drove End.

Then, after repassing Black Barn I walked between furlongs of ragwort to Gedney Dyke, where you may see cottages built of 'wattle and dab,' with clay chimneys; and reeds and willows and fat orchards. "Ye want to goo along the rampire," answered a woman of whom I asked the way; so, the spire of Holbeach as my landmark, I paced the rampire and came once more upon the Roman bank.

A road-mender who was spreading the heaps of Norfolk gravel that lay by the road, had something to say about wages. "Men ain't a-gettin' moor 'n haf (*a* as in hat) haf a crown a-day for harvest. What be the farmers a-thinkin' about? One on 'em, sir, offered me that money for reapin' mustard. But ye see I gets two shillin' now, and I should ha' had to work while seven o'clock for sixpence like. No, says I, I 'll make shift to do wi'out it."

On runs the road through Dutch scenery amid signs of a numerous population, past houses and cottages accessible only by foot-bridges, which as well as the gates are painted white. But it is observable here as in the Holland oversea that when you leave the highways for the byeways, you find unpainted gates. And signs of fertility abound: we are getting into the

region where large fields of onions ripen their seed, where chicory is grown for the profit of coffee-dealers, and woad, that ancient British dye-stuff, for the profit of dyers. And it is a region of churches with lofty spires which greet the eye from far across the vast level.

Holbeach, the birth-place of antiquarian Stukeley, has an out-of-the-world look: many are the one-storied tenements that border the highway; and among them a couple of cabins so venerable that their thatch is green and mossy. The church is good and the churchyard pleasant; the one showing Decorated workmanship and a peculiar north porch, turretted and embattled like a castle gate; the other sprinkled with trees. Queer tales are told of the manners of the inhabitants. "If you want to know what Kentucky is," said a native with whom I one day talked in London, "go and live at Holbeach." In Old White House Lodge, which stands a little way out of the town, Thistlewood hatched his conspiracy; and a whisper still runs concerning certain men of Holbeach who, to satisfy some whim or obligation, played a rubber of whist one night in the church with a corpse as one of the partners.

A characteristic passage in Cobbett's *Rural Rides* will bear quotation here, and prove instructive. He came hither in April, 1830, to deliver one of his rousing lectures, and says, "Holbeach lies in the midst of some of the richest land in the world . . . a neat little town; a most beautiful church with a spire, like that of 'the man of Ross, pointing to the skies;' gardens very pretty; fruit-trees in abundance, with blossom-buds ready to

burst; and land dark in colour, and as fine in substance as flour, as fine as if sifted through one of the sieves with which we get the dust out of the clover seed; and when cut deep down into with a spade, precisely, as to substance, like a piece of hard butter; yet nowhere is the *distress* greater than here. I walked on from from Holbeach, six miles, towards Boston; and seeing the fatness of the land, and the fine grass and the never-ending sheep lying about like *fat hogs*, stretched in the sun, and seeing the abject state of the labouring people, I could not help exclaiming, 'God has given us the best country in the world; our brave and wise and virtuous fathers, who built all these magnificent churches, gave us the best government in the world, and we, their cowardly and foolish and profligate sons, have made this once-paradise what we now behold.'"

To geologists the fen country is of especial interest from the evidence it affords of changes of level and the action of water. Land and water appear to have been in conflict from time immemorial. Now the sea has triumphed, rolling its waves over the whole region; now a marine current flowing steadily in one direction has prevailed, bringing white silty clay, gravel, flints, boulders, bones, and teeth of the elephant and hippopotamus, and shells. A seam of cockle-shells was discovered at Holbeach Hurn, three miles from the sea, and from two to three feet below the present surface, by Dr Latham; and at Sleaford, twenty miles from the sea, a bed of silt containing cockle and other shells has been met with. Next in order appear signs of the sluggish action of fresh water; of forests growing

during long periods, until overwhelmed by the sea and buried beneath a thick layer of silt and peat. Then another forest grew above the former, and produced oaks of which some of the stems were ten feet in diameter. This in turn perished; and ultimately the whole region became, as already described, one great expanse of marsh and fen.

Eight miles farther, past Whaplode, or Whapley, as the natives have it, past Moulton and Weston, and ditches choked with purple bulrushes, and the richest of pastures where the kine look fat and lazy, and past the fruitfullest of fields, and I came to Spalding.

Cobbett, unable to restrain his admiration, breaks out with "I defy tongue or pen to make the description adequate to the matter: to know what the thing is, you must *see* it. The same land continues all the way to Boston; endless grass and endless fat sheep; not a stone, not a weed."

This lavish fertility has such a charm, that, as a gentlewoman of Spalding remarked to me, she and others on returning from a visit to places of picturesque scenery, feel an emotion at sight of the rich and abundant vegetation not less pleasurable than that inspired by beautiful hilly landscapes.

"How much like a Dutch town," I said to myself, as, entering the ancient town of Spalding, at a sudden turn of the road, I saw the Welland bearing square-rigged vessels, on my right; and on my left houses shaded by a long row of trees.

"Nene and Welland
Shall drown all Holland,"

recites the ancient saying upon the district which we have crossed between the two rivers. Straight as a canal runs the stream, closely screened along its left bank by sheds and workshops and deserted warehouses, and narrow inclosed landing-places where nothing appears to be landed; and dingy dwelling-houses showing here and there a ragged roof of thatch, or dilapidated wooden gables, or bay-window overhanging the channel, some of them apparently ready to tumble into the water. And along their base grows a fringe of nettles and weeds, supported, as it seems, when the tide is low by a broad slope of mud. So narrow is the space left for road and river, so confined by houses on each side, that as I paced on and on down the long street, it seemed to me almost difficult to breathe. The aspect too is lifeless, and not without reason, for the railway has drawn trade from the river, and goods from the warehouses, and grain from the granaries. And such it continues, relieved here and there by the goodly residence of some substantial burgher, and the bordering trees on the right bank, all the way to the bridge.

The sun had set, so feeling tired with my day's walk of twenty-two miles, I repaired to an inn.

CHAPTER XXI.

Spalding—A Quiet Town—Ancient Arbours—A Pleasant Introduction—The Gentlemen's Society—The old Meeting Room—Minutes and Members—Valley of the Welland—Of the fens, fenny—Cowbit—Roman Stone—If the Banks should break!—The big Eel—Fen Fuel—Fen Soap—Willow *versus* Oak—Sheep and Cattle—Holland Waits—Millions of Midges—A Contrast: Surrey and Lincolnshire—Croyland—Thatch and Gas—The triangular Bridge—The Abbey—Historical Effigies—St Guthlac—The Prospect—Peterborough and Thorney—Reminiscences—St James's Deeping—More Fen—Bridges and Ditches—Geese—Etymology—Sixpence a Thrave—The Railway—Boston.

QUIET seems so habitual to Spalding that market-day scarcely disturbs it. Perhaps a flat environment favours repose. If local report may be trusted, the presence of booksellers' shops is not to be taken as a proof that books are much in request. Yet is the town not without merit, for here was founded the first provincial philosophical club in England, and here it still exists with minute books dating from the days of Queen Anne. The days of the monks have left their traces here and there; and you may see part of the groined ceiling of the old abbey in a barber's shop near the sheep-market. Ayscough Fee Hall, a Tudor house with oriel windows, looking forth on the fine

row of trees that adorns the river-bank above bridge, is worth notice, for it was once the residence of Maurice Johnson; and its garden contains the oldest yew arbours in the kingdom, lofty enough to show their dark closely-grown roofs above the wall.

My letter of introduction to the Rev. Edward Moore, Master of the Grammar School, met with a cordial response, and for a few too brief hours I enjoyed the pleasure of listening to scholarly discourse; of inspecting rare antiquities, including the church; and a visit to the head-quarters of the venerable Club. The church is the more interesting because it is one of the very few that have been let alone. The Club, or to give the full title, the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, hold their sittings in the front room of an old house near the market-place, approached by a stair from a butcher's shop; an incongruity which is explained by the fact that the room belongs to the Society—the house to some one else. You might almost fancy the place to have been an astrologer's consulting-room; for it has the same old presses that are represented in old engravings; the same chemical apparatus; the same green table and rush-bottomed chairs; the same big lizard and snake hanging from the ceiling. There are books of travel, of science and philosophy, and the Society's archives; and above the mantel-piece an old map of the town and neighbourhood, on which, among the explanatory notes, you may read that Spalding was dedicated to Venus, because, like her, it was said to have sprung from the foam of the sea.

A patient visitor who should turn over the leaves of the old minute books would find recorded many

curious facts and historic names. The founder was Maurice Johnson, who in 1709 drew a few friends together to read the *Tatler*, or some new work by the first authors of the time. "An endeavour new and untried before," says the historian. One evening the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was read, followed by an anonymous poem. Among the names of members we find Ames, whose name still lives in his *Typographical Antiquities;* Richard Bentley, who was once Master of Spalding Grammar School, and whose portrait hangs on the wall not far from the big lizard; Bowyer, the printer; Catesby, who wrote the natural history of Carolina; Gay the poet; Newton; Dr Desaguliers; Rev. Samuel Wesley; Alexander Pope; Stukeley; Sir Hans Sloane; Vertue; Brown Willis; Captain Perry, the engineer, one of the adventurers for draining Deeping fen; and many others known to fame. But from these we can easily infer that the Gentlemen's Club was what it professed to be.

Later in the day, after sharing the hospitality of the Master's Lodge, I started on a walk to Croyland, quitting the town by the pleasant above-bridge suburb. The road runs up the valley of the Welland, if that can be called a valley which resembles a vast plain, traversed by the stream in a deep winding furrow. Taking the right bank, the broad raised causeway commands a wide view over the great level which, with little variation of aspect, stretches

> "A vast expanse, beyond what eye can ken,
> From Ely's lofty towers to Lincoln fen."

The features are fields, swamps, and pastures; but

the pastures look rough and coarse, very different from the lawny meads that beautify the vale of Thames. The swampy patches are marked by a slight depression, and clumps and stiff fringes of dark green flags; and these and the white gates, with their black tarry wings, seem conspicuous objects in a landscape where trees are so few that they may be counted. The eye seeking some diversity rests with interest on a boy who, in pursuit of stray sheep, takes a running leap over the drains that cross his course.

Cowbit—in local speech Coobit—a little village, flanks one side of the road, and looks upon a swamp. At the farther end stands a curious old red-brick church, with a square tower of stone, which seems half buried in the surrounding earth. From this your eye wanders to the river, attracted by a great curve. Tame as it looks, a native bard has discerned and sung its beauty:

"River Welland, river Welland,
Past the bank-side cottage trees,
Past the happy aspens swell, and
Bear the cool night water-breeze:—
River Welland! river Welland!

"Shore, or shallow, morning dye it
With bright green and amber browns;
With a wild sweet beauty quiet
Round your isles and round your towns:—
River Welland! river Welland!"

Moreover, if we let our thought fly inland to the source, we find the sluggish rivers Nene and Welland invested with heart-stirring associations; for they both rise on the eastern slope of the ever-memorable field

of Naseby. On their way hither they have traversed "Cromwell's fen-country," as Thomas Carlyle calls it.

Farther on, in the toll-collector's garden stands a relic of the Roman days, which you may puzzle over if unwilling to believe with antiquaries that it is only a boundary stone. Beyond this we quit the road where it makes a circuit to the left, and take the shortest route along a high green bank through a region which shows more and more the aspects of the fens:

> "Studded with knolls, and little strips of fields
> Outstanding, osier-fringed."

The bank, paved with rough sods, leads us onwards past swamp and sluice; past rows of full-branched willows, and round-headed pollards; past belts of water-flags that glisten like metal, and clustering masses of loosestrife that look gorgeous by contrast. Lone houses appear in the distance backed by large yellow fields, so far off that no sound disturbs the leafy murmur which, mingling with the twitter of birds and insect hum, seems to make the silence harmonious. And all the while the great square tower of Croyland rising from amid trees on the horizon before us, reveals the limit of our pilgrimage, and the retreat of St Guthlac.

Anon a thought suggested by the time and place takes possession of the mind. How far would a flood spread? Would all those broad pastures now tenanted by flocks and herds, all those fertile fields, disappear far as eye can see if the banks should break? and what a country must this have been when for a few brief years the fens became the last stronghold of the Anglo-Saxon. Fish and fowl must then have been well-nigh as plenti-

ful as reeds. The monks in the cell at Spalding or in the stately Abbey to which we are journeying could never have been hungry with such abundant supplies around them. And do we not read that they paid a tribute of eels to churches far inland where such luxuries were rare? "When I go to dress an eel," says Izaak Walton, "I wish he were as long and big as that which was caught in Peterborough river, in the year 1667, which was a yard and three-quarters long." And elsewhere the cheerful old gossip tells us that "Lincolnshire boasteth to have the biggest pikes in England."

"Wytham eel and Ancum pike
In all the world there is none syke,"

says the proverb, embodying the names of the two rivers—Witham and Ancholme.

Yet what a raw, cold, damp, and aguish country must this have been before the waters were restrained. The heat lost by evaporation is enormous; and to us who see the land in its present condition, it seems hardly credible that the people of the olden time could ever have been warm. Long, even after the commencement of drainage, the cheerless aspect prevailed, as a native describes:

"Nothing there grew beneath the sky
But willows scarcely six feet high,
And osiers barely three feet dry;
And those of only one year's crop
The flood did fairly overtop."

The fuel was the same as on the treeless prairies. A Bostonian, writing in 1696, tells us—"The country

people gather up the dung of oxen and cows, which they temper with water, and spread on the ground about five inches thick, and cut it out in oblong pieces of about a foot, and call them dithes, which they use for fewel (but they smell strong); in some places they make walls of them for fencing. I have been credibly informed that one person's inventary of them came to £400."

Pig-droppings were used as a substitute for soap, a lye being run therewith, as with ashes on washing-days. And if the willows look monotonous, there was perhaps comfort in the proverb, "A willow will buy a horse, before an oak will buy a saddle." The horse when bought was never shod, for there were no hard roads in the fens; and it was remarked that fen horses had broader hoofs than horses reared on solid ground. The sheep too was a strange animal, big, coarse, and awkward; but yielding "very lusty wool," as the writer just quoted describes. He tells us further that the fens being common, the cattle and sheep feeding therein were branded, and every town, and indeed every proprietor, had a distinct brand or mark. "There are," he continues, "several fen-riders which look after them; but the cattle when used some small time in a piece of ground seldom leave it; so that each individual person may easily find his own goods in such a large tract." Frogs swarmed everywhere, and because of their croaking were called "Holland waits;" and midges outswarmed the frogs by millions, and were so tormenting in hot weather that people had to go about with nets over their faces.

Here I am tempted to quote once more from Cob-

bett. Having come to Croyland, he writes—"Here I was in the heart of the Fens. The whole country as *level* as the table on which I am now writing. The horizon like the sea in a dead calm: you see the morning sun come up, just as at sea; and see it go down over the rim, in just the same way as at sea in a calm. Everything grows well here; earth without a stone so big as a pin's head; grass as thick as it can grow on the ground; immense bowling greens separated by ditches; and not the sign of a dock or thistle or other weed to be seen. What a contrast between these and the heath-covered sand-hills of Surrey, amongst which I was born! yet the labourers, who spuddle about the ground in the little *dips* between those sand-hills are better off than those that exist in this fat of the land." This remark about the better condition of the Surrey labourers is still true. I have witnessed the contrast with my own eyes.

Croyland is ten miles from Spalding, and seen from the bank where the sods give place to gravel, is a pleasant-looking place, sheltered by an ample wood. "Every cart that comes to Croyland is shod with silver," is a saying that carries us back to days when there was no gravel. With a brewery; a broad irregular street where thatched houses and gas-lamps show past and present in close alliance, and a principal inn, it has the air of a rustic metropolis. In the market-place, on a spot whence sundry ways diverge, stands the far-famed "triangular bridge," a structure interesting alike from its singularity and antiquity. Imagine three ponderous flying buttresses, each eight feet in width and about fifteen in height, built upon the ground,

abutting one against the other at their upper extremities, and forming, so to speak, a huge tripod, and you will have an idea of the triangular bridge. The span of the arch thus formed is sixteen feet, the height from the road ten feet. The two narrow streams which once reflected its massive ribs have long been hidden; and now you may see carts drive under it. The ascents between the parapets are steep and roughly paved, and all the 'upper works,' to use a nautical term, look as patchy and shabby as if entrusted to the care of a blacksmith whose notion of the fitness of things was to fix as many iron cleets as possible into the stones, and who, where these failed, replaced the parapet by a wooden rail. Yet is it withal a picturesque object, and one which, when viewed from beneath, where its thick ribs and mouldings are best seen, impresses you with the idea of prodigious strength. It is moreover convenient as a lounging-place: I saw three rustics lying asleep in the sunshine as I paced over its crown.

A much mutilated statue in a sitting posture is fixed against the parapet on the southern slope, representing, as popular tradition has it, either Ethelbald, King of Mercia, or Oliver Cromwell. But in this instance popular tradition may not be trusted. For, as Mr Moore assumes in his interesting paper on the subject, the statue is a "representation of our Blessed Lord in glory," which formed the principal figure of a group that once attracted the pilgrim's eye as he paced into Croyland. "The triune form of this bridge," he explains further, "though an adaptation almost necessary from its position between three islands, was intended probably to be emblematic of the Holy Trinity.

It formed, no doubt, a noble base with three flights of stone steps, for a cross worthy of such a base. This elevation, then, partly necessary and partly optional, was embraced as a desirable spot on which to erect the grand cross, affording a chapel or station for the pilgrims approaching the Abbey, where they might offer their prayers, and perform such acts of penance and devotion as were usual before entering the monastery. It would, moreover, furnish the monks with a convenient rostrum for their customary mode of open-air preaching. I should be neither surprised nor sorry," adds Mr Moore, "to hear of its being thus made use of again by the priest of Croyland or his *locum tenens*." At all events, let us hope with him, that it will not be converted into a watch-house, as the Cross at Deeping was.

So we may conclude that the bridge has been standing ever since the latter half of the fourteenth century; that it bestrode two streams, one flowing from the Welland, the other from the Nene, and supported a magnificent canopied cross. And we read that Edward IV., in 1469, honoured the Abbot of Croyland with a visit, and walked from the Abbey to the bridge to embark for Fotheringhay. Nine years earlier, his rival, Henry VI., was entertained three days by Abbot Litlyngton.

The amorous monarch had not far to walk, for the venerable ruin stands at the eastern edge of the little town. Much praise do the antiquaries deserve whose endeavours have preserved it from utter decay, will be your thought on seeing the large massive buttresses which have been built to prop the decrepit structure.

A few tall arches dating from the twelfth century; a few fallen fragments; the dilapidated western front, and the parish church abutting thereon, are all that now survive to repay a visit. But if the relics are few, the associations are many; and the west front alone is worth a pilgrimage. There is none other like it in England. It was encrusted, so to speak, with canopied statues and other sculptures, some of which remain and tell mutely of passages in the Abbey's history. The apostles, distinguished by their peculiar symbols, occupy the upper tier; King Ethelbald, and St Bartholomew, the patron saint of the Abbey, St Guthlac and Kenulph the first abbot, William the Conqueror, his queen Matilda, and the celebrated Abbot Ingulphus, stand below on each side of the empty arched window space; and below these, again, other personages, royal, ecclesiastical, or military, and so on down to the lowermost niches, which were filled by the four Evangelists. In the quatrefoil over the doorway incidents are represented in relief of the hermit to whose seclusion here in "Muddy Land"—that is, Crowland or Croyland—the Abbey owes its origin.

> "St Guthlac could not bear the city's din,"

writes the bard above quoted;

> "But long'd to settle in some hermitage,
> And long'd to have the quiet of the wilds,
> And miss the haunting fret of human feet.
> And so at last he hired a boatman's boat;
> And two strong Saxons row'd him up the floods."

Look at the old carving; you see the boat just ar-

rived with its unhappy burden; the saint and his servitor tormented by demons; and the closing scene of his weary life, attended by St Pega his sister, and the same faithful servitor.

"And at the last, about the blessed time
Of our Lord's Passion, he fell grievous sick.
And lying on his rushes damp and cold,
And like to die, St Pega from the marsh
At Deeping came to see him.

* * * *

And after he was buried reverently,
And many relics of him found and kept,
The holy brotherhood of anchorites
Took up their dwelling in the sacred isle.
And Ethelbald, the good king, hearing of it—
Because his soul had need of many prayers
And deeds of grace, to save it in the end—
Took it in mind to found a monastery.
And, for the ground was marshy, brought new earth
From upland many miles in boats; and sank
Huge piles of oak and beech innumerable,
And so built up a church; and made it rich
With decorations, and great gifts of lands
By Nene and Welland and the Shepishee."

If we qualify the adjective "good" by our recollection of Ethelbald's violent amours, and the reprehension he got from Archbishop Boniface, we may accept this passage as history.

I discovered the sexton, and mounted to the top of the church-tower. Within the wide prospect thence beheld appear the towers of Peterborough—Medehamstede of the Saxon kings—to the south-west; the tall tower of Boston in the north-east, and sprinkled be-

tween the spires of towns and villages. In the farthest distance a bluish green tint prevails. Thorney is visible; a delectable place in days of old, whatever it may be now. "Very paradise," writes William of Malmesbury, "for that in pleasure and delight it resembleth Heaven itself; the very marshes abounding with trees, whose length, without knots, do emulate the stars.—And so smooth that there is nothing to hinder him that runs through it, neither is there any waste place in it; for in some parts thereof there are apple-trees, in others vines, which either spread upon the grounds, or run along the poles." Is there not something enticing in the old chronicler's description?

The spot where Guthlac built his cell is now a field some ten minutes' walk eastward of the Abbey. It is worth remembering that certain monks of Croyland, his successors, migrated to Cambridge, and there, as is said, opened one of the earliest schools in a barn. We might linger musing on all that has here befallen by fire, flood, and plundering Dane; of the replacing of Ethelbald's oak and beech by stately piles of stone; the distribution of small flaying knives among the monks on the 24th of August, to remind them of the martyrdom of their patron saint; of the choir organ which was carried on two men's shoulders all the way from London; and of noteworthy personages: Earl Waltheof—whose name came before us at Walthamstow, whose beheaded corpse was borne hither from Winchester, while Lanfranc was archbishop, and laid in a tomb at which miracles were wrought, and the hopes of the Anglo-Saxons reanimated; of Hereward, Lord of Brunn, the last champion of the

English race against the conquering Norman, who by his skill and valour kept the spoilers for years out of all the fen country. He was buried here with his wife, the Lady Alftrude. And others there are, from the learned Ingulphus down to Abbot Robert of Reading, who loved magnificent architecture. There is something in the retrospect for the lights and shadows of memory. But signs of evening appear; and if Boston is to be our sleeping-place for the night we must journey onward.

It is a long hour's walk to the railway station of St James's Deeping, or to Peakirk (St Pega Kirk); so taking a farewell look at the western front, with all its "yore-work," I departed from Croyland. There was a quarter-mile of gravel along a canal bank to be tramped, and then to follow a rampire "athurt the washes," where the prospect is more fenny than any we have yet seen. The broad drain is stagnant and exhales noisome odours; flags encroach everywhere, as if asserting their right to the treacherous soil, and patches of green mud swell up in the shallows. "Yes, we dew have floods," answered a passing rustic, "theer was one last summer swum all the mawn grass away." A broad deep drain runs along the outer base of the rampire, receiving at every thirty or forty yards a similar drain at right angles; and on the plots of ground thus inclosed by ditches, as we should call them in the south, the homesteads are built and gardens and orchards are planted. Somewhat surprising to a stranger is the populousness of the fens; but the land is good and brings much profit to the cultivator. Among the striking contrasts between fens and wolds

there is none more remarkable than the many signs of human habitation in the one and the unpeopled aspect of the other.

Every house has its foot-bridge painted white. Here and there a belt of big stones crossing the slopes of the bank shows the path by which the inmates get access to the hard path or to their boat in 'soft' weather. With their boats they take a short cut across to the opposite marshes, where the cattle find abundant herbage, and ducks and geese keep up a quacking demonstrative of full contentment. Where shall the web-footed creatures increase and multiply if not here? I saw a flock of perhaps a hundred geese migrating from one marsh to another: they walked in single file, a straight waddling line, which they preserved while crossing a bank; and then the horizontal line being interrupted by a perpendicular curve, all showing white upon the green ground, presented a curious sight. The Bostonian afore quoted mentions the great numbers of geese as a peculiarity of the fens; they were, however, of rank and muddy taste, so that the mud could be smelt while the bird was roasting. "But they make amends," he adds, "in the vast quantities of feathers and quills they yield; there having been three hundred bags, each weighing one hundred and a half, exported from Boston in the year, as appears by the Custom-house books."

"See Deeping Fens,
And the long lawns of Bourn. 'T is Art and Toil
Gives Nature value, multiplies her stores,
Varies, improves, creates,"

writes Dyer, referring to this part of the levels, where Deeping is a name as frequent as Burnham in Norfolk: and if we read *deep ing* as low meadow, we see at once its significance. No wonder that flag and sedge and rush and reed so much abound. The meadows are lower now than formerly, by reason of drainage: Deeping fen sank two feet in twenty-five years, by the pumping out of water from beneath the surface; and farmers were teased by the long-buried roots of trees stopping the ploughshare. At last they harnessed the horses to a wooden pin fixed in the plough, which, breaking with the stoppage, prevented further mischief; and the ploughman sticking a reed into the ground marked the place of the snag.

While waiting for the unpunctual train, I talked with the station-master about wages. "There 's no such thing as wages now," he said; "none at all. Farmers pay just what they can screw the men down to. Why, I remember when reapers got sixpence a thrave for their reaping; and a good quick hand could earn his pound a-day. Them was the times. Farmers did n't want the men to work for nothin' then." Sixpence a thrave was a farthing a sheaf.

The tardy train arrived. As we rolled onwards over the level landscape, the "glooming flats," the lonely poplars trembling in the dusk, and "from the dark fen the oxen's low," reminded me of certain passages sung by the Laureate. Many an allusion in his poems reveals his Lincolnshire birth.

In the pause at Spalding, my knapsack was handed to me by a messenger from the Lodge. Shortly afterwards we were rattling across the belt of loam and

salt-marsh, which, with a width of from four to fifteen miles, stretches forty-five miles along the coast, from Lynn to Wainfleet, and so came after dark to Boston. The noisy, gas-lighted market-place, which I crossed on my way to *The Peacock*, showed me a lively contrast with the solitude of my walk in the fens.

In native speech the name of the town is Bawston. In days of yore it was St Botolph's town.

CHAPTER XXII.

Aspects of Boston—Maudfoster Drain—The Witham—A badly Boy—A Grand Church—Good Singing, new and old—To Tattershall—Track of the Danes—Tattershall Castle—Bolingbroke and Revesby—Bad Bread and bad Beer—Contrast of Churches—Coningsby—Kirkby—Haltham—Scrivelsby—The Champions—View of the Wolds—Horncastle—The Roman Wall—Church Restoration—Memorials—Winceby Fight—High Toynton—I hardly can—The Wolds again—Glimpse of Lincoln—The Backbone—Spilsby and Franklin—Ashby Puerorum—A pretty Vale—Somersby, a Poet's Birthplace—Associations—Ugly Church—An evening Walk.

TAKING an early walk I saw that Boston may claim to be a town of clean and cheerful aspect: cheerful even with the shops shut. It is one of the places which some few Americans make a point of visiting, for did not the Pilgrim Fathers name Boston in New England after this thriving town of the old country? Truly the visitor's time and trouble are well bestowed. The view of the spacious market-place is heightened by the magnificent church-tower rising in the rear to a height of two hundred and seventy feet: a triumph of Perpendicular architecture: looking, says the old writer quoted in the foregoing chapter, "like a beautiful princess among a company of fair ladies,

no county yielding fairer churches." Stroll out to the Maudfoster drain, which, broad and deep as a river, flows straight past the north-eastern outskirts, and after admiring its fourfold system of gates and sluices, and the railway-bridge crossing at a sharp angle, turn and look at the town. Has it not a pleasant appearance, fringed by laburnums, fruit-trees, and flower-gardens, showing somewhat of a Dutch air? And how nobly the tower springing from the great mass of houses completes the picture.

The opposite quarter is traversed by the Witham, which when I saw it had a brisk muddy current. Ten miles lower it falls into Fossdyke Wash, at the rear of Boston Deeps, whose effect on steamboats will be remembered by many a voyager from London to Hull. Among the vessels lying at the wharves, you may see fishing-boats that come laden with the soles, for which, as well as for poultry and sausages, Boston is deservedly famous. *The Peacock* takes no little pride in the sausages which it supplies to guests during the winter season. The town has, moreover, a Working Men's College; and—worthy of all imitation—indicators to the railway-station at the street-corners. Among the antiquities is a curious old house with upper floor overhanging cornice-like in a back street, near the market-place. While looking at it, I heard a woman shout through a door at which she had been knocking, "I got a badly boy, and wants some milk."

My desire to ascend the tower was not gratified, the feat being, as the sexton told me, forbidden on Sundays. So I had to content myself with the floor

and a view of the spacious and lofty nave, the grand eastern window, chancel stalls, and rows of massive columns; all presenting to the eye a cathedral-like effect. Even from within the tower impresses you by its great height, as from the base you look far up to the finely-vaulted ceiling.

Jackson's *Te Deum* was so well sung in the morning service, its sweet and solemn harmonies resounding throughout the vast interior, that one might have fancied the singers desirous to outrival the fame of former days, when old Leland described the church as "the best and fayrest in all Lincolnshire, and servid so with singing, and that of cunning men, as no parish is in all England." At the close of the service I stole forth, and journeyed by railway to Tattershall. In this trip of twelve miles we pass from the Parts of Kesteven to the Parts of Lindsey, from the West to the North Riding, as we should say in Yorkshire; from fen to firm land; and as the line takes the river bank the view is enlivened by watery curves and numerous boats, some of which look like emigrants' arks.

Tattershall Castle is in sight from the station. It overlooks a region which, though still flat, is dry, and more abundant in corn than grass; where trees and hedgerows prevail, and where the rustic dialect finds utterance in such phrases as "I dean't kneow," and "nixt wake." Here, too, we come upon the track of the Danes. Look at the map, and you will perceive how thickly the names of places ending in *by* are sprinkled along the edge of the firm ground, while not one occurs in the fens. The daring invaders had perhaps a

wholesome dread of ague. They have left other than topographical traces, for you cannot travel the Parts of Lindsey without observing among the people forms and features which perpetuate the Danish characteristics.

All that remains of the castle is a great square tower of red brick, an excellent specimen of fifteenth-century building, which looks remarkably picturesque with an octagonal turret at each corner, and a range of bold machicolations at a height of nearly two hundred feet. It stands in a meadow between a farm-yard and a churchyard, partly surrounded by a moat; with lower windows built up and barred, to keep out intruders. The key is kept by an old woman, resident in one of an adjoining row of cottages. There was nothing to see inside, she told me, "but brick-work, and stone steps, and writin'." From the roof you can survey a prospect of leagues of yellow fields, bounded to the north by a timid elevation, to the south by a green expanse of fen. Bolingbroke, where Henry IV. was born, lies some two hours distant to the north-east, and a little higher is Revesby, once the abode of Sir Joseph Banks.

The old woman talks but little, and leaves the visitor who desires a story to gather it from the walls. Around the huge fire-place on the ground-floor you may see the cognizance and other devices of Ralph Cromwell, Lord Treasurer, who built the castle in the reign of Henry VI. His motto, N'aime je droit, among the "writin'," impresses us favourably while we mount the steps and pace the recesses, galleries, and passages contrived within the fifteen-feet thick

eastern wall, and recognize the significance of the old woman's "nothin' but brickwork." And if we descend to the crypt, and there examine the massive groined arches on which the ground-floor rests, our admiration will be excited by their strength and solidity. Of the occupants it will perhaps suffice to say that since the Lord Treasurer's days, the castle has belonged to Richmonds, Clintons, and Fortescues.

Lincolnshire, according to my experience, is a county of bad bread, bad beer, and heavy-footed women. The loaf which formed part of my simple dinner at the *Fortescue Arms* was the worst of all, its interior being a mass of damp clammy paste. A native, to whom I described it a day or two later, said, "Why, that 's nothin'. I 've seen the heart of a loaf run clean out as soon as the outside slice was cut off."

With Holland we have left the spires behind. Tattershall church has a low square tower: the same at Coningsby. The pastures look meagre compared with those in the fens; but you may take a field-path or a short cut without risk of coming to an impassable drain. Beyond Coningsby there is a glimpse of blue upland, and very gentle slopes appear to right and left of the road: a sign that by the evening our prospect will not be the dead level of the last two or three days.

Among the epitaphs in Kirkby church-yard, two seem to be worth copying. In one a young man thus recites:—

> Dear friends, do not lament my fall,
> For death must triumph over all;

I left my friends to go to bathe,
And there I found a watery grave.
If love and care could death prevent,
My days would not so soon have spent.

The other, in memory of a woman, declares

A friend so true,
There are but few
And difficult to find,
A Wife more just,
And true to trust;
There is not left behind.

Dyer, the poet, once held the livings of Coningsby and Kirkby; but apparently with not much satisfaction to himself, for he used to complain that the repairs of Coningsby and incidental expenses took away all the profit.

Kirkby church, a small simple-looking edifice, standing on a knoll, overlooking a pleasant green vale, is said to be the oldest in the county. Thence a field-path leads us to Haltham; after which, by a very lonesome path across a region of fields, at times shoulder-deep in wheat, and guided by a little new spire that shows white against the woods beyond, we come to Scrivelsby. There, from a shady lane we look into the park, which contains the residence of the Dymokes, who for some generations rode into Westminster Hall at every coronation, and challenged all within hearing to combat for the Crown. The challenge was recited for the last time at the coronation of George IV. The old hall, wherein hung the portraits of a race of champions, was burned down, and

never rebuilt. Scott reminds us that the place once belonged to the Marmions, for as his knight rides into Norham castle the pursuivants

> "hail'd him Lord of Fontenaye,
> Of Lutterward, and Scrivelbaye."

The lane winds and undulates, and presently, from the top of a rise, we get a view of the wolds, great rounded, lazy-looking hills, striped here and there with white roads, and the town of Horncastle lying in a hollow.

Thanks to the vicar of Horncastle and one of his friends, I saw what was worth seeing here under agreeable circumstances. The old wall which once protected the Roman camp is still traceable in places. From one of its corners by the churchyard we searched to the opposite corner, which shows, decorated with ivy, above the ash-pits of a row of cottages. Eastwards from this we saw it running along one side of a mason's yard, very rough in appearance, built of coarse unhewn sandstone and coarse mortar, without any lines of the red brick which in other walls built by the legions has a pleasing effect. Another portion skirts a tan-yard, and the western side is only to be seen here and there in the rear of shops and dwelling-houses, masked by whitewash or a grocer's pile of salt or barrels; but everywhere exhibiting the same coarse sandstone: good enough probably for the protection of Banovallum; the camp on the Bain, a small river which flows into the Witham a little below Tattershall.

Church restoration here, as in some other places

which I visited, has been followed by an increase in the numbers of the congregation. "It makes all the difference," said one of my informants, "when the parish sees that the clergyman 's in earnest." In this instance the restoration has been accomplished with praiseworthy regard to the fitness of things. The tower arch and side arches in the chancel have been opened; the pulpit and font are of Caen stone, finely carved; and the pew cushions, all of purple, should be a lesson to those who variegate their sittings with divers colours. The warming and ventilating, moreover, are perfect. By the clearance in the chancel an aumbry was discovered, and a small opening, which is supposed to have communicated with the dole-house, whither poor folk afflicted with skin diseases resorted for charity.

Among memorials on the wall, one records the sufferings of a former vicar whom the Roundheads treated with so little respect that they carried him away prisoner four times, and "exchang'd him into the garrison of Newark for a dissenting minister." Another bears the name of "the worthy and memorable" Knight Sir Ingram Hopton, who fell "in the attempt of seizing the arch-rebel in the bloody skirmish near Winceby." A leger-stone in the chancel commemorates a vicar deceased in 1723, whose epitaph sets forth that he laboured many years "apud paganos de Horncastle."

Up in the hills about five miles east of Horncastle there is a lane which for two hundred years has been known as Slash Lane, because of the slaughter there done upon the flying Royalists during Winceby fight. It was a short and sharp fight, lasting little more than

half an hour, and all but fatal to Cromwell, whose horse was shot under him while, leading the van, he rushed upon the enemy. He had no sooner struggled from beneath the animal and regained his feet, than he was again struck down by (as was believed at the time) Sir Ingram Hopton. But mounting another horse he completely routed the enemy: many were cut down in the pursuit, many drowned in ditches and quagmires, and Sir Ingram was killed. It was a decisive fight, for it led to the immediate surrender of Bolingbroke castle to the Parliamentarians, and cleared Lincolnshire of the so-called Papist army.

In the afternoon I set my face eastwards and walked up the long steep hill to High Toynton. By this road Sir John Henderson, Carlyle's "renegade Scott," led his troops to Winceby and discomfiture. The battle-field is a mile or two distant on the right. In passing through the village I asked a cottager to tell me the way to Somersby: he looked at me for about half a minute without speaking, then answered, "Soomersby! I hardly can." Up, up, mounts the road for nearly three miles, to the region of cool breezes, an agreeable change from the sultriness below; and the huge rounded breadths of the wolds come into view. Your eye roams over league after league, stretching far away to a blue undulating horizon, all cultivated; and yet the prospect has almost the barrenness of waste land. The thin hedge-rows look the thinner when traversing fields as large as those of Northumberland; and the trees are too few and too much scattered, and look too much as if they grew with effort, to relieve the general impression of naked-ness. A little higher, and far in the west crowning a

high dimly purple hill, a dark square mass shows us where to look for Lincoln Cathedral; and from that height there is gradual subsidence of the range in a south-westerly direction. What a vast expanse of tillage spreads between. Were our journey to end here we should know as much of the general appearance of Lincolnshire as by walking on to the Humber. To compensate for the great extent of marsh and fen Nature has heaved up a range of wolds forty-eight miles in length, fourteen in breadth, with intervening flats of arable land, and the highest summits about five hundred feet. Such is Lincolnshire.

These wolds form part of the Penine range, the backbone of England, as geologists call it, which we have walked across in Cumberland and Yorkshire; which reappears in the Downs of Norfolk; the Gogmagog hills, well known to undergraduates at Cambridge; in the White Warden hills of Bedfordshire, and the Buckinghamshire Chilterns.

Then with quick descent the road plunges down into a vale where ash-trees abound, and pleasant-looking lanes wind through the landscape from one byeroad to another. A few miles to the south-east would bring us to Spilsby, the birth-place of Sir John Franklin, where the house in which his father carried on the business of a linen-draper may still be seen in the market-place: and not far from it the statue erected in honour of the brave and true-hearted Arctic explorer.

"Ye want to keep strahit on; that 's the gainest way," was the information I got at the little village of Ashby Puerorum. Many times afterwards did I hear the same phrase: *want* applied in the sense of *must*.

Another descent brought me into a warmer vale, where cots peep out from masses of wood; the road curves over-shadowed by tall trees; a streamlet tumbles over a dam and makes a cool and cheerful murmur, and the seclusion seems complete. No prettier scene did I see in Lincolnshire. Another bend and there is a deep lane ascending between grander trees, with a clear and gentle spring at the foot of the bank, reflecting the hart's-tongue and other ferns that grow around it. I drew out one of the ferns to carry home as a memorial of the place: it is living yet. And this is Somersby: and in this delightfully sequestered spot our Poet Laureate was born.

I went to a cottage near by to inquire for the vicarage. The woman brought me a cup of tea to the door, and told me I should find the house at the top of the hill. She had lived there years ago as servant, "'t was her first place," and remembered Master Alfred. And then she paused as if in expectation; but I preferred not to question her concerning the youthful days of Master Alfred; so whether he was fonder of books than of hoops; of fishing than of school; and whether the neighbourhood thought him an idler or a genius, are questions which cannot be answered here.

> "Vex not thou the poet's mind,
> For thou canst not fathom it."

I paced slowly up the lane, not unwilling to prolong the enjoyment of green shade and the music of millions of leaves; and of snatches of "lofty rhyme" which with many fancies and associations came lightly into one's

mind. On the hill-top, between a house roofed with thatch and a strange-looking castellated dwelling, stands the vicarage, screened from the road by large chestnut trees: as plain and unpretending a residence as any Quaker could desire. It looks comfortable, you might be tempted to say, though not picturesque. Its attractions, however, lie to the rear, where a pleasant lawn and flower-plots and engirdling shrubs salute the eye of the visitor as he looks forth from a room fashioned at the cost of the Poet's father, whose panels and carvings remind him of days of old. I wished for a peep at the lawn, but though the front door stood open, saw no one of whom to ask permission; and the whole place seemed so tranquil, that I feared to disturb it by a pull at the bell.

Let us cross the road to the churchyard and take seat upon one of the low green mounds while we look into the *Ode to Memory*. No, there are no "shows of flaunting vines," nor "waterfall which ever sounds and shines," nor "purple cliffs," whence the mysterious visitant could come forth; but in what follows we recognize the picture.

"Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn,
The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland.
O! hither lead thy feet!

Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds,
Upon the ridged wolds,
When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud."

Down there in the deepest of the hollow we crossed the brook; under ash and oak and elm that embower Somersby we walked hither; and we have seen and heard the sheep upon the ridged wolds. Of the poplars four, so said the vicar's friend at Horncastle, one has disappeared. The three yet wave behind the house.

The church is as squat and ugly inside and out as if built by a very cheap contractor. The only picturesque thing about it is the tall old stone cross standing amid the graves. The stone tower is patched with red brick; the interior is bare and white; and by the accumulation of surrounding earth, a sloping bank is formed, down which the rain water streams to the foot of the walls. Truly, the church architecture of the wolds is a different thing from that of the fens.

And now we have seen with our eyes the birthplace of him whose poems charm thousands of readers wherever the English tongue is spoken or understood: a calm rustic haunt where a man may commune with Nature, and possess his soul in peace.

I loitered till the shadows grew long, then hung my knapsack once more on my shoulders, and started at a brisk pace for Louth. The pleasant shady environment continues for about a mile. A little farther,

and looking back from a brow, you see the nest of foliage within which Somersby is hidden; and all around an inclosing rim of wolds. Then while descending to Tetford I thought of what had been written of the golden age, once reckoned in the past, now in the future, and of what the Poet says,

> "———but well I know
> That unto him who works, and feels he works,
> This same grand year is ever at the doors."

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